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THE ✓ LOUISIANA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Vol. 33, No. 4

October, 1950

Dr. James G. Carson's Canebrake: A View of an Ante-Bellum
Louisiana Plantation, by Dr. Robert C. Reinders.

James Kirke Paulding's Creole Tale, by Dr. Floyd C. Watkins.

The New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853, by Donald
E. Everett.

Old Days on the Times-Democrat, by John Smith Kendall.

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DR. JAMES G. CARSON'S CANEBRAKE: A VIEW OF AN ANTE-BELLUM LOUISIANA PLANTATION

By

DR. ROBERT C. REINDERS *

One of the more fruitful sources of information on the ante-bellum plantation are the Affleck account books prepared by plantation owners or overseers.¹ These blue, hard-back account books give a day by day picture of plantation life; they also record plantation inventories and slave statistics. This article is an attempt to re-create a picture of Dr. James G. Carson's Canebrake plantation from its account books for 1856, 1857, and 1858. Additional sources are utilized to fill in the picture where the data from the account books is lacking.

Canebrake was on the Mississippi, fifteen miles below Lake Providence (Carroll Parish), in the fertile, thick, bottom lands of the Mississippi alluvial region.² The plantation was purchased in 1846. It contained 1,200 acres and cost Carson slightly more than \$42,000, of which only \$5,000 was paid "cash in hand;" the remainder was promised in yearly payments to extend to 1853.³ That same year he purchased additional land. He increased his holdings in the 1850's and by 1860 owned 2,576 acres, of which 1,751 acres were unimproved.⁴

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¹ For a description of these account books and their originator, Thomas Affleck, see Wendell Holmes Stephenson, "A Quarter Century of a Mississippi Plantation: Eli J. Capell of 'Pleasant Hill,'" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids), XXIII (September, 1936), 355-374; William Ransom Hogan (ed.), *Guide to Manuscript Collections Department of Archives Louisiana State University* (University, Louisiana, 1940); Letter of Thomas Affleck, *De Bow's Review* (New Orleans), V (January, 1848), 83-84.

² G. D. Harris, "The Tertiary Geology of the Mississippi River." *A Report on the Geology of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1902), Part 6, 4-39.

³ "Deed, James G. Carson by Abraham Halsey," Conveyance Book E, p. 142 and Mortgage Book C, p. 349. Records of the Sixth District Court, Lake Providence, Louisiana. Carson mortgaged the land and sixty of his slaves to Halsey.

⁴ "Deed, James G. Carson by Manuel White," Conveyance Book E, p. 71. Records of the Sixth District Court, Lake Providence, Louisiana; Eighth U. S. Census, 1860, Schedule 4, Agriculture, manuscript returns for Carroll Parish. (Original, Duke University Library; microfilm copy, The Library of The University of Texas.)

The portion of the plantation that fronted the Mississippi was leveed,⁵ a necessity along the lower Mississippi, particularly along the inside of a bend. A great deal of labor was expended yearly in repairing and increasing the height of the levee.⁶ This work was authorized by a Parish levee board which cooperated with State and District Boards of Swamp Land Commissioners. Dr. Carson, himself, was a member of the Board of Swamp Land Commissioners for Carroll and Madison Parishes.⁷ Bermuda grass, comparatively new in the 1850's, was planted on the levee by Carson's hands in an endeavor to create a more formidable embankment.⁸

From the river, the plantation extended out in a fan shape. On the south side of the plantation a small bayou ran from the levee. This bayou passed through a cypress swamp and eventually drained into the navigable Bayou Tensas.⁹ It was along the bayou that the gin, the shops, and the slave quarters were located. The plantation garden was situated between the bayou and the south line of the plantation; it was the only cultivated spot on that side of the plantation. The bayou was crossed by a bridge and was dammed in 1857.¹⁰ The back part of the plantation was wooded and uncultivated, but was slowly being brought under cultivation. The customary drainage ditches were constructed at right angles to the levee from the center of the plantation to the swamp behind.¹¹

The account books, written by the overseers, accept the buildings on the plantation as matter of fact, and their nature and number has to be gleaned from the incidentals of the daily recordings. The overseer's home was located near the slave quarters and was, most likely, a simple structure. The negroes lived in the "quarters." Their homes were cabins erected by negro artisans utilizing logs cuts on the plantation.¹² The slave dwellings

⁵ Plantation Map, back fly-leaf, *Account Book for 1857*.

⁶ *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 20, 21, 26, 30.

⁷ *Carroll Record* (Lake Providence, May 16, 1868: "Report of the Commissioner, Fourth District," *Annual Report of the Board of Swamp Land Commissioners of the State of Louisiana 1858* (New Orleans), 7-8; H. D. Peck, "The Levee System of Louisiana," *De Bow's Review* (New Orleans), VIII (February, 1850), 101-105; Sam Mins, "Louisiana's Administration of Swamp Land Funds," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (New Orleans), XXVIII (January, 1945), 277-325. Sales of swamp lands were used to finance the State levee building program.

⁸ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 16; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 30. See, William Hewson, *Principles and Practices of Embanking Levees from River Floods as Applied to the 'Levees' of the Mississippi* (New York, 1860), 69.

⁹ H. Bry, "The Ouchita Country," *De Bow's Review* (New Orleans), III (May, 1847), 407-411. An excellent map of this area may be found in the *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1891), Sheet 20, Plate 105.

¹⁰ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 21.

¹¹ Map, back fly leaf, *Acct. Bk.*, 1857.

¹² *Acct. Bk.* 1857, 42; *Acct. Bk.* 1858, 28.

were periodically scoured and whitewashed, but whether the owner or the overseer ever inspected the cabins, the account books do not indicate.¹³

The plantation had its own cotton gin, around which a scaffold was constructed in 1856 as well as a "rain shed" to house cotton awaiting ginning.¹⁴ In addition there was a "seed house" in which to store the cotton seed.¹⁵ Near the gin stood the shops for the repair and storage of tools.¹⁶ A kiln, two wells, a plantation bell, and a smoke house complete the list of permanent structures stated in the account books.¹⁷ But in light of contemporary practice, it would seem logical that there were various protecting barns for the milch cows, stables for the horses and the mules, a carriage house, a kitchen, a corn crib, an infirmary, and a multitude of privies. The account books are also silent on any details of the plantation house. Indeed, the only picture that can be obtained of the Carson home is found in these reminiscences of an elderly resident of East Carroll Parish. "I remember [it] as being a big comfortable house set well back from the public road, running along the base of the levee. It was reached by a tree lined avenue."¹⁸

James G. Carson, the proprietor of Canebrake, came from a well known Natchez family.¹⁹ As the professional prefix indicates, he was a physician, but he was apparently not in active practice as his overseer records an absence for several months and other doctors on occasion treated his slaves. Of his character, no definite analysis can be made. Like many of his fellow planters in the South-West he showed a propensity for quick profits by planting cotton to the detriment of other crops and livestock. He evidently was demanding on his overseers for he dismissed one in the middle of the picking season. Certainly he was wealthy; in 1860 he was the second largest cotton producer in the parish, his plantation being valued at \$77,000.²⁰ He took a small part in local affairs

¹³ *Acct. Bk. 1856*, 16, 27; *Acct. Bk. 1857*, 20; *Acct. Bk. 1858*, 23.

¹⁴ *Acct. Bk., 1856*, 2, 34, 35.

¹⁵ *Acct. Bk., 1857*, 19.

¹⁶ Map, back fly leaf, *Acct. Bk., 1857*.

¹⁷ *Acct. Bk., 1857*, 3, 9, 54; *Acct. Bk., 1858*, 80.

¹⁸ Minnie Murphy to Robert C. Reinders, May 7, 1951. The plantation home was destroyed in the course of the post Civil War levee building projects.

¹⁹ Dunbar Rowland, *Encyclopedia of Mississippi History* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1907), 376.

²⁰ Eighth U. S. Census, 1860, Schedule 4, Agriculture. Manuscript returns for Carroll Parish. (Original, Duke University Library; microfilm copy, The Library of The University of Texas.)

and shared the rituals of the Methodist Church and the Masonic Order.²¹

Catherine Carson, the mistress of Canebrake, had a reputation for entertaining "often and charmingly."²² Together, she and her husband were part of a congenial plantation society.²³ They were surrounded by wealthy planters with whom they maintained the friendliest of relations, following the Southern custom of borrowing and loaning goods with only a meagre account made of these transactions.²⁴

In the three years recorded in the Canebrake account books, three overseers were employed. The first, H. M. Meek, was punctilious in his record of the weather and the daily work.²⁵ His command of English grammar and spelling was not perfect, but it was better than that of many of his contemporaries. That he had trouble with the Negroes early in 1856 is indicated by frequent references to runaways. He seems to have had a greater interest in religion than his successors for he records the Sunday presence of the Methodist ministers. How far inefficient management in addition to a late winter, spring floods, a severe wind storm, and cotton pests was responsible for the small cotton crop of 1856, it would be impossible to determine. But that the meagre crop was an important consideration in leading to his dismissal, is more than likely.

D. L. Diamond served as overseer from January 1, 1857 to September, 1858. He was not as verbose in his daily recordings as Meek and the researcher finds only the bare facts of work and weather. He appeared to be an efficient overseer; there is no record of slave runaways and to the undoubted satisfaction of Carson, he increased the output of cotton from 403 bales in 1856 to 615 bales in 1857. His work in 1858 appeared to progress satisfactorily, when on September 29, the handwriting changes

²¹ *Carroll Record* (Lake Providence, Louisiana) May 16, 1868; *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 28.

²² Minnie Murphy to Robert C. Reinders, May 7, 1951; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 90.

²³ The Carson plantation was adjacent to those of Henry Goodrich and Judge Oliver Morgan. Goodrich also owned a store and a river boat landing. Judge Morgan was one of the wealthiest men in the State. His plantation was the "show piece" of the parish; stories of the "doings" on his plantation remain part of the parish legends. (Mrs.) Randle J. Geisler to Robert C. Reinders, April 21, 1951.

²⁴ Corn and pork composed the majority of products borrowed or loaned, but molasses, wagons, and in one case, 121 plates were also interchanged: *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 10, 11, 14, 19; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 4; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 1, 74, 121.

²⁵ In the slave census of 1850 Meek is listed as the owner of four slaves. However, there is no record of his ownership of real estate. It may be that he was employed as an overseer and rented his slaves to his employer. Seventh U. S. Census, 1850, Schedule I, Slaves, Manuscript returns for Carroll Parish. (Original, Duke University Library microfilm copy, The Library of The University of Texas).

to that of the owner, and the pithy statement "Discharged Mr. Diamond," is the only indication that the Doctor had reason to be dissatisfied with his overseer.²⁶

Carson managed the plantation himself until November 21, when he obtained the use of his neighbor's overseer, F. M. Williams.²⁷ Williams appeared more intelligent than the previous overseers. In matters of style, he was an Edmund Burke in contrast to Meek and Diamond.²⁸ He was critical of the Negroes, contending that they pretended illness. He offered the theory that "it was not possible for a Negro to do anything like half-work."²⁹ As Judge Morgan's overseer, he was perhaps less limited in his social position; at any rate, he was the only overseer to record events at the "big house."³⁰

The plantation force was composed of 156 slaves in December of 1858, an increase of thirteen over December, 1856. This gain represented the natural increase of births over deaths; there is no record of slave purchases, and none sold.³¹ In determining the value of his slaves, Carson used a nearly arbitrary system of evaluation. Each child under a year was listed at \$25, at two the slave was valued at \$75, and from thence till it was ten, \$25 was added for each year. A less rigid system continued until the age of sixteen or seventeen, when the male slave was valued at \$700. From eighteen to forty, the male slave was listed at \$800 and the female at \$600; beyond this the value decreased. One forty-six year old negro and three septenarians were without value. Thomas, an artisan, was valued at \$1,200. By this system the men were averaged at \$437.80 and the women at \$346.47 in 1856. It might be concluded, perhaps, that these figures were primarily for the eyes of a parish assessor. Commercial slave prices were much higher; Carson's calculations were some \$500 to \$900 below current New Orleans quotations.³²

²⁶ *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 82. 698 bales were produced in 1858.

²⁷ In the Agriculture census of 1860, Williams is listed as Judge Morgan's overseer.

²⁸ Romantically morbid, Williams ends the 1858 account book with the following: "The old year expires tonight. Thousands of our fellow beings have gone down to their graves this year—and in [as] another year rolls [a]round thousands more will fall. Farewell, Farewell old year."

²⁹ *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 80, 86, 87.

³⁰ *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 90.

³¹ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 110, 116-117; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 110, 116-117; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 110, 116-117.

³² L. C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (New York, 1941), II, 665-667; Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (Baltimore, 1931), 351-355.

Except for the separation of house and field hands, there was no absolute employment division in the Canebrake labor force.³³ However, among the field hands, the duties of a few slaves were partially determined by their skills. There were three hands listed as barrel makers and three as carpenters.³⁴ Three men were assigned to operate the cotton gin and four the press; one man operated the corn grinder, and five Negroes were classified as wagoneers.³⁵

The task assignments and gang divisions of the majority of the field hands varied from day to day and from crop to crop. Workers were transferred from one job to another as the situation demanded. Diamond had a group he called "cotton men" who were divided into plow hands and hoe hands. In event of rain, this group was usually transferred to ditching.³⁶ The women were employed as field hands and also made cotton baskets, sewed clothes, put up fences, and exterminated cotton pests.³⁷ The children, or "chaps" as Diamond designated them, were organized into trash gangs to police the plantation area and to do light jobs.³⁸

None of the overseers records the daily or weekly food rations of the slaves. A garden was planted for the use of the plantation. Unlike the nearly universal Southern practice, it was tended during the standard work day and not after the slaves had finished the day's labor.³⁹ In 1860 Canebrake plantation raised 7,500 bushels of corn, 400 bushels of Irish potatoes, 1,500 bushels of sweet potatoes, and 400 bushels of field peas. Watermelons, pumpkins, turnips, mustard greens, orchard products, milk, and butter were also produced in large quantities. Hogs and beef cattle were raised, butchered in the winter months, and preserved for use throughout the year.⁴⁰ Despite these efforts, the plantation was

³³ In 1858, eight men and eight women of working age were unconnected with field labor. The women might have been all house servants, but it is likely that some of the men were engaged in occupations not mentioned in the account books as sheep and cattle herders, blacksmith, gardener, etc.

³⁴ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 3, 43; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 102.

³⁵ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 5; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 3. Outside white artisans had to be employed in 1856 to repair the cotton gin saws. *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 18.

³⁶ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 25; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 20.

³⁷ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 33; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 34, 35, 83, 86; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 36.

³⁸ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 89; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 10.

³⁹ Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, I, 422; Frederick Law Olmstead, *Journey Through the Sea-Board Slave States* (New York, 1861), 421; *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 7.

⁴⁰ Eighth U. S. Census, 1860, Schedule 4, Agriculture. Manuscript returns for Carroll Parish. (Original, Duke University Library; microfilm copy, The Library of The University of Texas). There were also 100 sheep raised on the plantation, but in three years there is record of only one butchered. The complete list of farm animals for 1860 was: horses 36, mules 33, mulch cows 16, beef cattle 30, working oxen 5, and swine 40. Besides corn, Carson raised 375 bushels of oats and 50 tons of hay to feed his livestock.

unable to arrive at self-sufficiency; in addition to salt and coffee, molasses, flour, mess pork, and corn had to be purchased.⁴¹

The slaves were attired simply. Cloth was purchased and shirts, pants, and dresses were made by the women.⁴² The overseers were required to measure and record the feet sizes of the Negroes yearly. On the basis of this information, shoes were ordered.⁴³ Male field hands were also issued "mud boots" and most of the men and women were issued hats.⁴⁴ In 1857, the women were given socks and in 1858 all of the slaves were given handkerchiefs.⁴⁵ The children had to do without shoes and headgear, though on one occasion it was stated that little "Eliza got [a] Shemise [sic]."⁴⁶

The medical treatment of the Carson slaves was excellent. The experience of the master presumably saved the hands from the rude, home-made quackery of many Southern plantations.⁴⁷ Dr. Carson and the doctors employed in his absence were solicitous of the health of the slaves; in the case of Old Edmund, a dying slave, daily visitations were made by a neighboring doctor.⁴⁸ No doctors were called in for slave births, in which event a Negro mid-wife probably served as the plantation obstetrician.

All was not hard labor upon the plantation. In slack seasons, the slaves were often freed of labor the whole or half of Saturday.⁴⁹ Sunday holidays were rigidly kept, except when the duress of rising flood waters required labor on the Lord's Day.⁵⁰ Sunday religious services were held by the Methodist Church. Four different Methodist ministers preached at the Carson plantation in these three years 1856-1858. One, the Reverend Cravens, was the pastor in nearby Lake Providence. Another, the Reverend Davis, was employed by the Church to minister to the colored of north-eastern Louisiana.⁵¹ Usually separate services were held for whites

⁴¹ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 11, 14; Acct. Bk., 1857, 9; Acct. Bk., 1858, 87, 89.*

⁴² *Acct. Bk., 1856, 11.*

⁴³ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 81.* Meek, the first overseer, evidently without shoe selling experience, calculated the size of the women's feet at lengths that were extremely unfeminine. The error was corrected or else Carolyn, Amy, Louisa, and others painfully attended Sunday services, their size 10½ feet wedged within the confines of a size 9 shoe.

⁴⁴ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 84.*

⁴⁵ *Acct. Bk., 1857, 102-104; Acct. Bk., 1858, 102-104.*

⁴⁶ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 104.*

⁴⁷ One planter proudly boasted of a cure-all medicine that he required his slaves to take when ill. Failure to take the medicine would be punishable by thirty-nine lashes, Weymouth T. Jordan, "The Management Rules of an Alabama Black Belt Plantation, 1848-1862," *Agricultural History* (Chicago), XVIII (January, 1944), 53-64.

⁴⁸ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 40, 43.* Like many plantation crews, there was a certain amount of "protest illness" in which recovery was usually coincidental with a holiday. *Acct. Bk., 1856, 88; Acct. Bk., 1858, 86, 87.*

⁴⁹ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 25, 33; Acct. Bk., 1857, 7, 19, 24; Acct. Bk., 1858, 35 36.*

⁵⁰ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 16.*

⁵¹ Charles F. Deems, ed., *Annals of Southern Methodism for 1857* (New York, 1858), 20.

and blacks. The fourth of July and Christmas week were also holidays.⁵² In this latter holiday, the Negroes held a "big to-do" and were given a special food allotment of molasses, flour, and coffee.⁵³

There are few comments on slave discipline in the account books. If there were whippings, the overseers no doubt viewed it as too ordinary a matter to catalogue. Overseer Meek had trouble with runaways. These slaves either returned or were brought back in a few days.⁵⁴ There is no mention of either runaways or punishment under Diamond. Under Diamond's successor, Jesse was incarcerated and released four days later, "he having repented of his sin."⁵⁵

The account books afford a systematic study of the plantation routine. In January, the hands prepared the fields for the crops to be planted. New acres were cleared for cultivation by removing the timber or burning it in the fields. Rails were made, fences constructed, and drainage ditches were dug. In the fields previously under cultivation drainage ditches were cleaned out and cotton stalks were pulled and burned.⁵⁶

Early in February, ploughing began, first upon the new ground, then upon the older fields which had previously been fertilized with manure and cotton seed.⁵⁷ The first seed crop planted was in oats and followed early in March by corn.⁵⁸ Corn was planted by running one-horse plows followed by two persons per plow dropping seed while the balance of the hands covered the seed with hoes.⁵⁹ Watermelons and pumpkins were then planted between the rows of corn. The planting of the corn fields took from three to four weeks.⁶⁰

In the first week of March, the ridging of cotton commenced.⁶¹ Planting was started as soon as the ridging process was completed,

⁵² *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 30, 88; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 91; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 90.

⁵³ *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 90.

⁵⁴ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 6, 17, 19, 22, 49.

⁵⁵ *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 80, 83.

⁵⁶ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 3-7, 11; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 3-7. The minor repair and clean up tasks were usually accomplished during January and February.

⁵⁷ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 9. Carson did not share the current optimism over the salubrious effects of nitrate fertilizer. Charles Colby, "Guano," *De Bow's Review* (New Orleans), XIX (August, 1855), 219-222. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, II, 807.

⁵⁸ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 14; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 12; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 12.

⁵⁹ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 11-13.

⁶⁰ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 14, 17.

⁶¹ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 14; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 12-13. Ridging consisted of throwing two furrows of land together with a two-horse plow.

and by late March or early April all of the cotton seed was in the ground.⁶² In 1857 both some corn and cotton had to be replanted because of a late April frost.⁶³

At the end of April the first leaves of cotton appeared. The crop was then scraped by plowing between the ridges to remove the weeds and "hill" the plants.⁶⁴ Hoe gangs toiled in the fields chopping weeds and thinning out the cotton plants.⁶⁵ All hands were engaged in the fields during this period for the cotton had to be constantly cultivated with the aid of hoes, plows, "scrapers," and "sweeps."⁶⁶ However, after the appearance of the cotton blooms in mid-June, cultivation was less intensive and frequent Saturday holidays were allowed. But late summer also was a dangerous season for plant diseases in the form of "bead bugs," "lice," and "army worms."⁶⁷ While some women made baskets, others fought these pests.

Cotton was not the sole concern in these summer months. Oats was harvested and peas were planted in their stead. Sweet potato fields were hoed and Irish potatoes were hilled.⁶⁸ In the first two or three weeks of August the corn was "pulled," bound, tied, and stored for winter fodder. From a portion of the corn the ears were removed and later shelled and ground.

Cotton picking began late in August with the women and children picking the early opened bolls.⁶⁹ When the overseer noted that the cotton was "opening fast" all hands, men, women, and children, were in the fields. After the picked cotton had been allowed to "sweat" three or four days, seven men were transferred from the fields to the gin and press.⁷⁰ The cotton picking extended well into December,⁷¹ though occasionally interrupted by other occupations. During periods of rain, when picking was impossible, the men customarily chopped wood or "ditched."⁷² Or, when the fields were picked over and the overseer awaited the opening of

⁶² *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 18. A drill and harrow was used for planting; this gave straight rows and an even distribution of seed. It enabled the hands to plant as much as 80 acres of cotton a day. *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 16, 17.

⁶³ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 19.

⁶⁴ The "scrape" and the "sweep" were shallow cultivators.

⁶⁵ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 21-23.

⁶⁶ In 1857, by June 11, the cotton had been worked over four times with plows and sweeps and three times with hoes.

⁶⁷ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 46, 49; *Acct. Bk.*, 1858, 23, 36. On September 14, 1856, the overseer commented that "Army worms has eat up nearly all the cotton."

⁶⁸ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 26, 27; *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 27, 31, 42.

⁶⁹ Cotton picking began on August 14, 1856, September 1, 1857, and August 16, 1858.

⁷⁰ *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 43, 46, 47.

⁷¹ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 87 (December 9); *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 89 (December 16).

⁷² *Acct. Bk.*, 1857, 58, 83, 86.

the less mature boles, he assigned hands to gather corn or dig potatoes. The last cotton picking was done by small groups, the trash gangs.⁷³

That Carson had a hard working, efficient crew of cotton pickers is revealed by the following graph representing the best picking days of weeks chosen for a maximum employment of the slaves.

Date ⁷⁴	No. of Hands	Average Lbs. Per Hand	Highest No. of Lbs. Picked	Lowest No. of Lbs. Picked
1856				
Sept. 12	67	166.6	Henry 245	Orphelia 95
Sept. 17	63	180.4	Doris 260	Richard 90
Oct. 1	54	291.6	Peter 450	Esther 130
Oct. 9	71	228.9	Doris 345	L. Dave 130
			Pompey 345	John 130
1857				
Sept. 20	69	291.1	Pompey 480	Ben L. 105
Sept. 29	70	276.5	Jeff 480	Ben L. 125
Oct. 13	55	269.4	Davy 415	Louis 115
Oct. 19	66	274.8	Pompey 380	Ben L. 130
			Jeff 380	
Nov. 7	65	291.9	Henry 450	Ben L. 135
1858				
Sept. 9	65	222.4	Nelly 310	Joseph 105
Sept. 18	62	255.2	Ross 370	Joseph 110
Sept. 30	72	300.5	4 hands 385	Ella 105
Oct. 6	72	275.9	Jeff 355	Ella 100
Oct. 22	70	240.7	Tom 315	Marie 85
			Pompey 315	

After ginning and baling, the cotton was hauled to the river boat landing, loaded on board a steamboat, and consigned to the New Orleans commission firm of Henderson and Peale.⁷⁵ In 1856

⁷³ *Acct. Bk.*, 1856, 86, 89.

⁷⁴ The low figures were those of children from ten to twelve years of age doing their first years of picking. The highest total average, that of September 30, 1858, was made on the day that Dr. Carson assumed the management of the plantation after discharging Diamond.

⁷⁵ The cotton was shipped in average lots of fifty bales. The bales averaged (in 1856) 432.68 lbs. The bales were bound in hemp; Carson evidently was not convinced that iron hoops, then being advocated by a few planters was economical. "Cotton and Cotton Planters," *De Bow's Review* (New Orleans), III (January, 1847), 1-20.

The *Vicksburg* was the only steamboat mentioned as transporting Carson's cotton. It was a typical Mississippi River boat, a one-deck side wheeler of 635 tons. *Ship Registers and Enrollments of New Orleans, Louisiana* (University, Louisiana), V, 265.

Carson shipped 1,495 bags of cotton seed to the Union Oil Company of Providence, Rhode Island.⁷⁶

This picture of the Carson plantation life was not to last. During the Civil War, Dr. Carson was forced, with many of the parish, to abandon his plantation. He fled to Texas where he died during the war. Canebrake was sold in 1866 for a pittance.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Acct. Bk., 1856, 74, 78.* This was the first company to manufacture cotton seed oil on a commercial basis. Before the Civil War three plants had been constructed in the South. W. D. Shue, "The Cotton Oil Industry," *Publication of the Mississippi Historical Association* (Oxford, 1907), VIII, 253-289.

⁷⁷ "Succession Deed of James G. Carson." Conveyance Book G, p. 221, Records of the Sixth District Court, Lake Providence, Louisiana.

JAMES KIRKE PAULDING'S CREOLE TALE

by

DR. FLOYD C. WATKINS*

Regionalism in America may be attributed at least partly to a stubborn persistence of cultural identity among homogeneous folk. Though the Creole is a hybrid surrounded by somewhat pure-blooded "Anglo-Americans," as George Washington Cable called many of us Southerners, his Latin temperament has made him at least as proud of his race and customs as the Southern mountaineer. He independently maintained his individuality long enough for it to be recorded, though sometimes inaccurately, by the local colorists who searched all the corners of the United States for "quaintness" in the last half of the nineteenth century.

No Southern people with the possible exception of the mountaineer, has been so well described as the Creole. Cable, Lafcadio Hearn, Grace King, Kate Chopin—these and many others have so universally popularized the legends and manners of the native Louisianians that one wonders why the subject was not exploited earlier by writers of fiction. The quantity of Cable's writings and his popularity have given him the reputation of being the first to publish local-color Creole tales. Although he was the first important writer in the field, he was preempted. In 1843, for example, Madame Emilie Evershed published in French a sentimental novel about tangled family relationships among the Creoles. Another early work in French was Charles Testut's novel *Calisto*, which was only partly set in Louisiana. The earliest work in English, according to Lizzie Carter McVoy and Ruth Bates Campbell in *A Bibliography of Fiction by Louisianians and on Louisiana Subjects*, was Joseph Beckham Cobb's *The Creole; or, Siege of New Orleans. A Historical Romance Founded on the Events of 1814-15*, published in 1850.

This paucity of early writings made it possible for a Northerner to write what is probably the first fiction in English about the Creoles. James Kirke Paulding, novelist, essayist, politician, and a Knickerbocker, made a vote-gathering journey through the South with ex-President Martin Van Buren in 1842. The two Dutchmen were attempting to insure Van Buren's nomination

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for a second term. They arrived in New Orleans in April. Expecting to see crimes, duels, and riots of the sort reported by travelers, Paulding was surprised to find "one of the most orderly, decorous cities in the world."¹ In "The Mississippi," published in *Graham's Magazine* in 1843,² he praised the flowers and the Creole ladies and expressed his fears of floods in the city. On a thirty-or forty-mile trip up the river he visited "two or three sugar plantations," one of which may have furnished the material for the story reprinted below. He spent some time describing the typical plantation, the gardens, and the swamp. Finally, he spoke of "the well-bred, refined simplicity, as well as unobtrusive hospitality of these worthy Creole planters."

As one of the first Americans to maintain that an adequacy of native materials was not the cause for any lack of great writing in the New World, Paulding throughout his life attempted to demonstrate that the subject matter for great novels and great fiction was omnipresent. He had written about the West for years before he made his Western tour. The trip resulted in many articles which were based on his observations about the Mississippi Valley. Realizing for the first time the distinctive character of the Creole and his importance in the culture of a sizable region of America, Paulding tried to capture the character of the people in "The Creole's Daughter." It is even possible that the Baron de M. in Paulding's tale is taken from Bernard de Marigny, that more spectacular and typical of the Creole aristocrats.

The result, except for its priority in dealing with the Creoles, was not astounding. The tale is inferior to nearly all his novels and his local-color stories about his own people, the New York Dutch. In his middle sixties and past his prime as an author, Paulding succumbed to the prevailing mood of the decade and stooped all too often to sentimentality and melodrama. There are too many embraces and tears, and the heroine's admirable restraint during the duel does not entirely compensate for the swoon once the affair is settled. The hero seems too perfect; the villain too despicable. Perhaps also the economic sermon against debt and speculation is overemphasized.

Despite these weaknesses, however, the tale is interesting historically. Not only did Paulding select for a subject a race

¹ Mentor Lee Williams, "James Kirke Paulding on the Mississippi," *The Journal of Mississippi History*, X (October, 1948), 323.

² Reprinted in *ibid.*

that was to become famous among local colorists, but he also anticipated many of their methods. There are in "The Creole's Daughter" a feeble attempt to describe native architecture and an effort to catch something of the independent and aristocratic spirit of the Creole planters. The selection of a duel as the focal point of the story contributes suspense and describes an avocation all too prevalent among early Louisianians.

By critical standards Paulding's success is negligible. Its historical importance, however, and the rarity of *The Columbian Magazine*, where it was first printed in July 1846, are sufficient cause for its revival here.

THE CREOLE'S DAUGHTER

by

JAMES K. PAULDING

Shortly after the cession of the vast territory of Louisiana, the most fertile region of the Old or New World, a young gentleman by the name of Eustace Chetwood, in the course of a desultory rambling life, in which he had visited many parts of Europe, came to the crescent city, commonly called New Orleans, with the intention of passing a few days. He was competently rich, well educated and accomplished, and possessed of such extraordinary graces of person, manner and mind, that while abroad he received the appellation of the "Handsome American," and, as report said, actually made an impression on a certain young queen, who had been wedded to an old husband for reasons of state—in other words, to cement a perpetual alliance between two neighboring kingdoms that never preserved a good understanding afterward.

At the crescent city, Chetwood—who spoke French with great fluency—by means of his letters of introduction and the most effectual one of all—that which he carried in his face—soon became associated with the proud old Creoles, the ancient lords of the soil, who at that period, as they have been ever since, were rather shy of the bustling active Yankees, and looked on their incorporation with the republican family as a great calamity. Nevertheless, there was something about Chetwood that dispelled every prejudice as soon as he became known, and his having

spent a year at Paris was an additional recommendation. He soon became quite domesticated in the Creole circle, and learned properly to estimate the proud simplicity and native integrity of the men as well as to admire the grace and beauty of the women.

Among those who took a special liking to Chetwood was the Baron de M., descended from one of the noblest families of Normandy, to which belonged the heroic Robert Guiscard and his brothers, who, like the race of Napoleon, all became kings. The Baron possessed an estate just in the vicinity of the city which, though of great prospective value, produced but a moderate income, and lived in a queer old chateau, with a monstrous peaked roof, and a large garden of half a dozen acres in the rear, filled with orange trees and flowering shrubs, living on their own odors, while crowds of mocking birds luxuriated amid the fragrant wilderness, repaying the shelter they enjoyed by their varied and inimitable songs.

The Baron, though his family had been transplanted some four or five generations, was a genuine Frenchman, in habits, temper and disposition. His vivacity was irrepressible and his wit inexhaustible. He was brave, passionate, generous and forgiving; and he considered France as his native country, though he had never been there but once in his life, and came away in a rage on hearing a great philosopher discussing in favor of a republican government. Nevertheless he still cherished a devout attachment to France and had sent his only child Julia to be educated in Paris. With this sturdy descendant of the invincible Normans, Chetwood formed an intimacy that might have aspired to the dignity of friendship. The Baron was indeed a delightful companion, and his very foibles made him only the more amusing, for they were drowned by his high qualities and embellished by his wit and vivacity. Though careless, almost slovenly in his dress, any one initiated in the mysteries of good breeding could tell he was a gentleman a mile distant. The Baron carried Chetwood everywhere, introduced him to all the beautiful Creole ladies, and would have conferred on him more substantial benefits had occasion required or opportunity offered.

The month of April, which in that genial clime comes laughing on the zephyr's wing and clothed with flowers and breathing odors, had now arrived, and one day the Baron invited his friend to join in a fete, which was to take place a few miles above the

city at the chateau of a wealthy planter, who luxuriated under the title of Marquis, on the opposite side of the sublime father of waters. The company embarked in a ferry boat and nothing material occurred in crossing until they arrived at the opposite shore, when a plain elderly gentleman, who did not seem to belong to the party, on stepping from the boat to the bank, missed his footing and fell into the river, which was then at the Spring flood and ran with a rapid current, apparently composed of an infinite combination of boiling whirlpools. He was swept away instantly and would unquestionably have been drowned had not Chetwood, quick as thought, jumped ashore, ran along the bank until he overtook the floating body, which was kept from sinking by the force and density of the current, and plunging into the boiling eddies seized the poor gentleman by the skirts. By this time others had followed, and as Chetwood and his companion fortunately floated into a little nook where there was a counter current, expedients were adopted which succeeded in rescuing both from the imminent danger in which they were involved.

Chetwood felt nothing more than a temporary exhaustion, from which he soon recovered, but the old gentleman had become insensible and it was sometime before he exhibited signs of life. They both returned together in the same boat, and the old gentleman asked the name of his preserver, on learning which he feebly exclaimed, "That is also my name." No farther explanation took place as he was too much exhausted to converse, and on parting he had only strength to squeeze Chetwood's hand and say, "We shall see each other again." That very day the young man received a letter requiring his immediate presence at home, which was in the North, and he departed early the next morning, without again seeing his namesake, to the infinite discomfiture of the Baron, who signified his intention of forthwith sending for his daughter Julia to comfort him for the loss of his friend.

Some years had elapsed, and all know a few years produce great changes in the world, especially in this New World of our's. The city of the crescent had waxed great and mighty, through that magic influence exercised by the grand impulse which liberty gives to the mind of man and the destinies of nations. The spirit of speculation waxed rife among men; the staid, prudent Creoles had become infected; the worthy Baron de M., was deeply inoculated by precept and example, and, in an evil hour, was seduced

by a bilious, cadaverous schemer to purchase a tract of land adjoining his own estate, at a price which not only absorbed all his ready money but involved a mortgage on his paternal property almost equivalent to its entire value, estimated according to the exaggerated notion which then prevailed. But the tide which had flowed so high at the flood sank proportionably low at the ebb, and the unfortunate Baron now saw himself and his property at the mercy of a man who had the reputation of being little better than a miser. Julia had returned some years before, and her beauty, her virtues, her affection and her obedience, would have almost reconciled him to his fate, had not his heart bitterly reproached him with having by his rash cupidity robbed her of an inheritance that he was bound to preserve for her.

Things were in this state, when one day Chetwood received a letter from an eminent citizen of New Orleans belonging to the legal profession, informing him of the death of one Roger Chetwood of that city, who had devised to him his whole estate, estimated at more than a million of dollars, and requesting his immediate presence to settle affairs and take possession. The will, of which a copy was enclosed, ran in these words:

"I Roger Chetwood, (no gentleman,) of New-Orleans, being of sound mind and unsound body, having none that I cared for and none that cared for me that I know of, had determined to die without making a will, in the reasonable expectation that my heirs at law, (whoever they may be,) would consume a good portion of my estate in lawsuits. But inasmuch as my cousin (six times removed) Eustace Chetwood, of Hillside, in the State of New York, from the mere impulse of humanity and not knowing me from Adam, did confer on me the only benefit I ever recollect to have received from any of my living fellow creatures, by saving me from the maw of old father Mississippi, I do hereby, in acknowledgement of a favor which though of little worth was well meant, bequeath my whole estate real and personal to him and his heirs forever, or until either he or some one of his posterity, shall spend it in riotous living or waste it in idle speculations, as I think quite probable; and I do hereby request the said Eustace Chetwood in case he should ever see or hear of any of my relations worthy of the gift, he will bestow on them such portion of this my bequest as he may deem proper, or none at all, just as he pleases."

Chetwood lost no time in proceeding to the crescent city. Here his first inquiry was after his old friend, the Baron, who he learned was on a visit with his daughter at a plantation some twenty or thirty miles up the river, whence he was expected to return every day. He next undertook an investigation of the affairs of his deceased benefactor, and was fairly astonished at the magnitude of the bequest. There seemed no end to the stocks, bonds, mortgages and lands, this indefatigable economist had acquired; and Chetwood was struck with a painful sensation on finding among the mass a mortgage on the property of his old friend the Baron for an immense amount, the interest on which had accumulated for two years. He waited with great impatience until informed of the return of the Baron, and then placing the mortgage in his pocket took his way to the old chateau.

On approaching the gate he was struck with the change which a few years had produced. Though old-fashioned and totally divested of all the spruce nicety of our modern mansion it had hitherto presented a most respectable appearance, exhibiting no vestage [*sic*] of neglect or ruin. Now, however, everything seemed to be changed; the ancient gate hung by a single rusty hinge; the fence was decayed and in many places broken; the shrubs and flowers bordering the avenue leading to the chateau presented the appearance of utter desolation; and the plastering of the old mansion had fallen off in many places, giving the whole an air of melancholy neglect, or incapacity to repair the dilapidation. The whole combined sufficiently told the story of the occupant of a mansion which in effect belonged to another, and where neither party felt an interest in its preservation.

As he entered the gate an awkward embarrassment came over him, which increased every step he approached, until he almost felt like a culprit about to appear before one whom he had grievously wronged, and he scarcely had courage to raise the old-fashioned knocker which guarded the door under the semblance of a brazen lion couchant. Formerly it used to shine like gold, but now it was covered with a green rust that obscured all its ancient splendors. Chetwood knocked at the door, not like a lordly creditor coming to demand a debt, but as an humble debtor to beseech its remission. The old gray-headed negro, who used to welcome the friend of his master with a portentous grin of

pleasure now received him with a most lugubrious countenance and conducted him to the usual sitting room, where he found the Baron and the young lady.

The old man, with a pale face and plainly attired, met his friend with what seemed a forced welcome, and introduced Chetwood to the young lady as his daughter. She received him with an evident constraint, and the demeanor of the Baron was evidently divested of that gay, frank hilarity with which he had always treated his young friend. A few formal inquiries and a most embarrassing silence ensued. At length Chetwood gathered himself together and addressed the Baron as follows, at the same time drawing the mortgage from his pocket, with great trepidation:—

"Monsieur le Baron, I wish to have a few words with you in private"—looking at Julia.

"My daughter," replied the old man, "is acquainted with all my affairs. I have no secrets from her. We know your business and are prepared for the result."

Chetwood became still more embarrassed, for a pair of the most beautiful eyes, beaming from the loveliest face he had ever seen, were fixed upon him with an intense expression which he could neither comprehend nor withstand. At length recovering himself, he began in hurried accents:—

"Monsieur Le Baron, in looking over the papers of my deceased relative, I—I—" Here those same eyes which had so discomfited him before, beamed with such intense eagerness upon him, that he scarcely knew what he was saying, or what he meant to say. "Monsieur Le Baron, as I before observed, I found this paper—"

"Yes, Monsieur," interrupted the Baron, "I understand it all; it is in your power to reduce myself and my daughter to beggary at any moment you please."

"But my dear friend the power is nothing without the will." This was said with a tone and manner that made Julia start, and she eyed him yet more eagerly as if life and death were in his words. Chetwood now became animated with his purpose.

"Yes, Baron, the power is nothing without the will. I desire—nay, I demand that you answer me one question frankly and

without disguise. By what disposition of this paper can I best contribute to your happiness and that of your daughter?" Here Julia seemed as if she would look into his very soul, while a bright gleam of hope flashed across her beautiful face. The Baron became confused and stammered out something altogether unintelligible.

"Speak," cried Chetwood, "speak frankly and freely; I require it as due to our ancient friendship. What disposition of this paper will best contribute to your happiness and that of your daughter?"

The Baron remained for some moments silent, while Julia continued to gaze more intently if possible on Chetwood, whose countenance, animated by his generous purpose, glowed in more than its usual beauty and expression.

"Well," said the Baron with an effort, "you are my dictator, my fate is at your disposal, and I must obey your commands. On purchasing the property of your relative I paid a sum more than sufficient to meet all the arrearages of interest; the property still remains unsold and uninjured, and the first wish of my heart is that it may be received back again and the agreement cancelled."

"So be it then," exclaimed Chetwood, tearing the mortgage in pieces and casting them into the chimney. "From this moment you owe me nothing but your friendship, which while you remained my debtor I felt I never could enjoy." He opened his arms, and the old gentleman cast himself on his bosom, and the reunion of the two friends was consummated. But what became of Julia all this while? She had watched the countenance of Chetwood, and seen the noble expression of generosity with which it gradually kindled; and when at length she saw him tear the paper on which the fortunes of her only parent depended, and heard the words by which the act was accompanied, she started from her seat, rushed eagerly toward him, exclaiming, with clasped hands, "Oh! I knew that face could not deceive me!" and burst into a passion of grateful tears.

Now happiness once again abided in the old weather-worn chateau of the light hearted Baron and that of his daughter Julia, whose heart though animated by the pure hilarity of conscious innocence was capable of nourishing and bringing to maturity,

the deepest and most intense feelings. The good Baron adored his friend since bound to him by the tie of gratitude, which in a generous mind is one of the strongest that can link one human being to another, and Julia, the beautiful, gentle, yet energetic Julia, often looked at Chetwood when he did not see her with an expression that indicated a feeling warmer than friendship and purer than love.

Thus wagged their little world, till one bright Spring morning Chetwood and Julia were walking in the garden of the old chateau, breathing all the sweets of a Southern Spring and cheered by the music of a hundred warbling birds that found a balmy refuge in the orange groves and many flowered vines which clambered around in all directions. The garden, however, though the old gardener and Julia too had bestirred themselves busily since it had been restored to its ancient possessor, still exhibited signs of former neglect, and in many places the weeds contended with the flowers for mastery.

"I am almost ashamed of the condition of my garden," said Julia. "But for some years past, I never could look on it as our's, and had not the heart to embellish a paradise from which we might every day be expelled. But now—now that you have made me so happy by giving it back again, I shall devote myself to restoring it once more to its former beauty, that every year it may become more worthy of the generous giver."

As she said this, she looked up in his face with such a mingled expression of confiding faith, of boundless gratitude and inexpressible softness, that he could no longer resist the impulse of his heart.

"Julia," said he, and he trembled as he spoke; "Julia, sit down on this bench, for I have that to say to you on the answer to which depends much, perhaps all my future happiness in this world."

"Ah!" replied Julia, in all the pure simplicity of virgin innocence; "Ah! if your happiness depends on my answer you need not fear."

"Julia, you said I had made you happy by what you call giving your father his property back again. What I have given to you—I mean happiness—will you not bestow on me?"

"What!" cried she, with all the archness inherited from the good Baron, "What, you want your property again, do you?"

"No—I ask for what is of far greater worth in my eyes. Julia—beloved Julia—will you give me your heart? Will you entrust your innocence, your beauty, your future happiness for all life long, to my care? Will you be mine forever? Speak one word—only one."

But she could not speak. Though she was full eighteen and had grown to early maturity in that genial clime which early ripens fruits, flowers and woman. She at first seemed scarcely to comprehend what was meant by this proposal, and looked up wistfully in his face where she soon read an explanation, in the bright fervor of his speaking eye, which seemed to dart its meaning into her very soul. The language was that of nature, and nature comprehended it at once. Julia blushed to the eyes, and trembled in every limb as she timidly said:—

"Does my father sanction your request?"

"Yes, dearest Julia, he has said that the first wish of his heart is to see us united."

"Then so it is mine!" exclaimed Julia, and cast herself on his bosom, with all the strong faith, confiding tenderness and boundless love, of which woman's heart is the sole depository. They could not express their own feelings, and who shall dare to describe them? The balmy air, the blooming flowers, the warbling birds, alone witnessed the scene of virtuous bliss, and as the old Baron, some hour or two after, appeared in search of them, they came forward hand in hand, like the first pair of Eden ere they listened to the serpent, dropped on their knees before him and received his blessing.

Now all was bright in the present, still brighter in the future, when suddenly one of those dark clouds that as often obscure the prospects of man as the face of nature, arose and cast its shadow over the destinies of the happy pair. One day Julia returned from a walk pale and agitated, and finding Chetwood in the sitting room threw herself into his arms and burst into tears. Being urged to explain the cause of her emotions, she resisted for a time, but at length exclaimed:—

"Ah! I have met Guitaub!"

"And who is he—and what of him?" inquired Chetwood.

"You don't know him then? You have never seen, or heard of Guitaub? So much the better."

Chetwood could make nothing of this, but at length by strong importunity, wrung from the blushing indignant girl the cause of her grief. Guitaub was a young man, a descendant of an ancient Creole family, in reduced circumstances, who had declared himself her admirer almost immediately on her return from France, and still persevered in his attention though treated with equal scorn by both father and daughter. His character was more than equivocal; his habits dissipated, and he was known to subsist altogether by gambling. Still as he had committed no public act of dishonesty, and was a disciple of the code of honor, which in the crescent city is almost equally sacred with the decalogue, he had not lost his caste among gentlemen, especially young gentlemen not very particular in the choice of their associates, and no one could decline a message of a certain kind from him without incurring the penalty of expulsion from the society of his equals. Guitaub was a man of great intrepidity—that is to say, he was impudent, arrogant and ferocious, perpetually provoking quarrels and always victorious in combat. He was a complete master of the sword, and having killed more than one antagonist, was an object if not of respect at least of fear to all his associates.

This dangerous man had been absent for some time, but now returned, and meeting Julia in the street had, with his usual brutal insolence, informed her he was acquainted with her engagement; reproached her with ingratitude for his long attachment; and concluded by swearing a bitter oath, that she should never marry any man but him, for he had doomed every pretender to her hand to certain destruction.

"He will dog your steps," exclaimed Julia; "he will follow you everywhere; he will insult you publicly until your forbearance is worn out; he will force you to meet him, and that meeting will be death. You must leave the city immediately, and if necessary you must resign me, for I am not worth the purchase. I entreat, I conjure you to fly."

"And if I do," exclaimed Chetwood, "may I live forever branded as a traitor to woman and a coward among men. Trust

me, dearest love, I will bear all that man can bear; I will curb my temper to the utmost; I will never for a moment forget that I am entrusted with the sacred deposit of your happiness and act as a faithful trustee of what I value more than life. But I cannot fly this ferocious bully, and if forced to meet him at the point of the sword, I trust that he will not find me an easy conquest. Dear Julia, even you brought up and living among a people who consider cowardice as the greatest of crimes, would despise me were I to fly and leave you at the mercy of this whiskered ruffian."

Julia said no more. She did not acquiesce, yet could not dissent, and resorted to the refuge of her sex—sighs and tears. It was not long before Chetwood met Guitaub, who, as Julia had predicted, watched his motions incessantly. It was in a public walk, where many people of both sexes and of the class with which Chetwood associated, were strolling about in various directions. Whenever he met Guitaub, the latter passed some palpable affront upon him, either by a look of bitter scowl, a contemptuous word or by brushing rudely against him. It was a trying moment to Chetwood, whose blood boiled in his veins, and he longed to stretch the insulting bully at his feet. But he remembered Julia, and as those insults were only obvious to himself, at length hurried away, degraded in his own estimation as a man and ashamed to look a woman in the face.

Guitaub continued to persevere in this course of silent outrage. He watched every opportunity of encountering Chetwood, and harassing his feelings by every latent insult his ingenuity could invent until at last his life became a burthen to him. He saw that he was every day becoming an object of contempt to his associates, who had at length noticed the conduct of Guitaub. His color faded; he grew thin and weak, and his mind became a chaos of contending passions. At length he opened his mind to Julia. He told her of the persevering insolence of Guitaub; of the contempt into which he himself was daily sinking, not only in his own estimation but that of his fellows; of those terrible conflicts which were gradually undermining his health, prostrating his mind, and concluded by making her arbiter of his fate. Julia turned pale, trembled, and remained speechless for a time. At length the Creole's daughter, animated by all the pride of tenderness of love, and by the recollection of her Norman ancestors, cast herself on his bosom, burst into tears and exclaimed:—

"Go! do what becomes a man. I could not love you if you were disgraced. Go, call this ruffian to account, and if you fall the heart that has been devoted to you shall be consecrated to Heaven."

"Fear not, my love," replied Chetwood, "though in the sight of God I purpose wilfully to do what is perhaps wrong under any circumstances, still will I trust that, as compared with my adversary I am certainly excusable, he will judge equitably between us and defend the right. Besides, I have my arm and my sword to trust to, nor am I devoid of skill. While abroad I devoted myself to fencing under the most famous masters, and what I then practised as a healthful, elegant exercise, I will now convert into a means of defending my life and protecting my honor." They parted with a promise from Chetwood, that he would conceal nothing from Julia, and above all, apprise her when the crisis came and the meeting was arranged.

Chetwood did not immediately seek Guitaub, and little less did he avoid him. It so happened, however, that he met the latter at dinner, where a large company was assembled, and was placed exactly opposite to him. In the course of the entertainment, the glasses being filled, Guitaub deliberately leaned across the table, reached Chetwood's glass, and, nodding significantly, drank it off.

"Pray, sir," said Chetwood, "may I inquire what you mean by this?"

"O-ho!" replied the other, "you don't understand me. I was only drinking your health in honor of your unequalled courage in pocketing insults."

"Permit me to return the compliment," replied Chetwood, filling another glass and dashing the contents full in the face of Guitaub. The result is easily anticipated. A challenge was given and accepted, and the meeting arranged for the following morning at sunrise. Chetwood sought Julia, and at once without preface informed her of the state of things.

"To-morrow decides my fate, dear Julia, and I have not a moment to lose in preparation. In anticipation of this result I have already made my will, and earnestly entreat you to accept the bequest I have made."

"Your bequest!" interrupted Julia, in a calm, solemn voice, that neither trembled nor faltered. "Your bequest? If you die I shall want nothing. I shall no more belong to this world."

The parting was inexpressibly solemn. Not a tear was shed by either. Not another word was uttered. One silent embrace—one soft, lingering kiss—and they separated, perhaps forever. The next morning dawned, with a soft, hallowed lustre, after a nightly shower; the mocking birds sang among the orange-groves and the flowers shed their fragrance all around, as Chetwood took his way accompanied by a friend to the place of meeting. He found Guitaub already there prancing about with the air of a conqueror, and apparently eagerly thirsting for the blood of his antagonist. His first salutation was:—

"You are somewhat late, sir. I suppose you staid to say your prayers. You have need of them, for you have not long to live."

"Our lives are both in the hands of the Giver," replied Chetwood; and the preliminaries being settled, the combat commenced with inveterate hatred and fury on the part of Guitaub; on that of the other with calm, collected determination. Each was master of his weapon, and several passes were exchanged without effect, when, in making a desperate lunge, the foot of Guitaub slipped on the wet grass, and he pitched forward his full length on the ground. Chetwood immediately stepped back a few paces and said,

"Rise, sir; I do not wish to take advantage of your misfortune."

Guitaub arose, and, totally insensible to the generous forbearance of his adversary, redoubled his efforts with such imprudent, eager animosity, that he gave Chetwood an opportunity of executing a manœuvre he had learned of a famous professor abroad, by which he wrested the sword from Guitaub's hand, threw it up in the air, and catching it in his own, courteously presented the hilt to his adversary. The ruffian, still insensible to this second instance of magnanimity, snatched the sword, and before Chetwood could resume his defense, made a desperate push, which wounded him in the left shoulder.

"Blood-thirsty, treacherous ruffian," exclaimed Chetwood, "forbearance is no longer a virtue toward such an assassin. Look to yourself, Guitaub!"

Two minutes ended the contest, and the ruffian bully received a thrust that stretched him dead on the ground. The surgeon bound up the wound of Chetwood, which was not dangerous, and he took his way toward the chateau of the Baron, wishing to be himself his own messenger.

In his absence Julia had not closed her eyes. She sat apparently buried in profound contemplation, without a tear, a sigh or a word, until the sun rose and shone into her window, when she aspirated to herself, "The hour is come!" and sinking on her knees, remained with her hands clasped, while her tearless eyes were directed upward. In this situation she remained until she heard the massy knocker announcing a visitor. Then it was that she was overcome. The moment had arrived in which her fate was to be made known to her, and the uncertainty became insupportable. She sank down insensible, and was only awakened to consciousness by the caresses, kisses and entreaties of her lover. When she saw him before her alive, she uttered a shriek of transport and cried out,

"Oh, heaven be praised! I have not been your murderer. But you are covered with blood. I hope it is not that of the ruffian Guitaub."

"He has paid his forfeit," replied Chetwood, "let us speak of him no more. Though he merited his fate, I am sorry it fell to my lot to inflict it; and it must be the endeavor of my future life to atone for having caused the death of a fellow creature."

Chetwood speedily recovered; was wedded to Julia, who in after life soothed him by her tenderness, supported him by her firmness, and elevated him by her piety, so that not a day passed that he did not thank heaven for having bestowed upon him the Creole's Daughter.

THE NEW ORLEANS YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMIC OF 1853

by

DONALD E. EVERETT

A harrowing fear of yellow fever hovered in the minds of most New Orleanians throughout the entire nineteenth century. Since deaths from the dread pestilence occurred in sixty-seven summers of the hundred-year period, residents of the city could never be certain of escape until October or November. In some years, it is true, only a few persons died from the fever, but yellow fever deaths exceeded two thousand in each of the summers of 1819, 1847, 1853, 1854, 1855, 1858, 1867, and 1878.

Traditionally, the year 1769 marks the first appearance of yellow fever in New Orleans, but it was not until 1796 that the fever seized the city with epidemic strength. From that time until 1905, the last appearance of the malady in epidemic proportions, the population of the Crescent City sought a means to eradicate this deterrent to its physical and financial well-being. By the latter date New Orleans physicians were putting into practice the findings of Dr. Walter Reed and other researchers who had determined the cause of the fever.¹

In the summer of 1853 New Orleans suffered more deaths from yellow fever than at any time in its history. The first appearance of the fever in the city was among the crew of the *Augusta*, a ship directly from Bremen which docked on May 12. James McGuigan, an Irish immigrant from Liverpool, was the first reported death. He died in Charity Hospital on May 28.²

The most reliable contemporary statistical survey estimates that the population in 1853 was between 150,000 and 160,000,³ and that 25,000 to 30,000 Orleanians had fled the city in the wake of the epidemic. Of the probable 125,000 persons in the city, it was estimated that 29,120 had contacted yellow fever, and 8,101

¹ George Augustin, *History of Yellow Fever* (New Orleans, 1909), 844-914. See also Thais Emelda Kaiser "Yellow Fever in Nineteenth Century New Orleans" (M.A. Thesis, Tulane University, 1941).

² *Report of the Sanitary Commission of New Orleans* (New Orleans, 1853), 3.

³ According to the official census figures for 1853 the population of New Orleans was 145,449. *Statistical View of the United States: Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, D. C., 1854), 371n. The tremendous influx of immigrants into the city in the spring of 1853 may account for the discrepancy between the figures of Dr. Edward H. Barton and the census.

of this number had died.⁴ August 21, with 230 deaths from yellow fever, was referred to as the "Black Day," although some reports listed as high as 254 dying from the same cause on the following day.⁵

As death claimed its toll in increasing numbers almost every able person in the city was involved in one way or another in the care of the sick or the dead. By the tenth of August the streets were nearly deserted, and the clubs and barrooms were frequented "more for the purpose of exchanging calamitous news than from social impulses." Another point of congregation was the bulletin board on which the Board of Health posted daily the number of interments. Funeral trains crowded the routes to the cemeteries morning and evening as the dead were brought to their final resting place in conveyances of all types. Confusion and delay were evident in each of the cemeteries and the summer sun sometimes rested on improperly cared for bodies to the extent that the mourners were sickened by the putrid odors. In an effort to counteract the fetid atmosphere, the gasworks opened its stores of tar for public use. Tar was burned in and around the cemeteries and lime was sprinkled on the broken earth covering the coffins in shallow graves. Additional tar was burned in the yards of private residences and public drays dropped barrels of tar at intervals of 150 feet in the middle of Canal, Rampart, and Esplanade streets. Nightfall, after these barrels of tar had been lit, resulted in a "pandemonium glare" throughout the city.⁶

As the epidemic advanced throughout the city there were numerous conjectures as to the causes of yellow fever. Some suggested that the fever was an aggravated form of the disease then rumored to be prevalent in Rio de Janeiro. In accordance with the theory that atmospheric conditions had much to do with the disease, there were "atmosphere analysts" who thought that the absence of ozone might be connected with the spread of the fever.⁷ One learned physician believed that it might be a combination of the meteorological conditions and the filth of the city,⁸ while another, Dr. J. S. M'Farlane, maintained that the sanitary conditions of the city had absolutely nothing to do with the epidemic.

⁴ Edward H. Barton, *Report Upon the Sanitary Condition of New Orleans* (New York, 1857), 189, 255.

⁵ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *DeBow's Review* (New Orleans,) XII (December, 1853), 629.

⁶ William L. Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan* (New York, 1860), 150-53.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207-8.

⁸ Barton, *Report Upon the Sanitary Condition of New Orleans*, 214-15.

In former years, the latter recalled, many thought that yellow fever was caused by "the unpaved streets—the decaying gun-wales of flat-boats, which formed our only sidewalks, . . . our low wooden and decomposable dwellings, and our exposed batture." Although most of these complaints had been eradicated at "almost ruinous cost," Dr. M'Farlane noted that yellow fever had returned in "an infinitely more aggravated" form.⁹ The New Orleans *Bulletin* ventured "to say that in no other civilized city of the world, has such an absurd and outrageous theory [as M'Farlane's] even been advanced to justify or extenuate municipal dereliction."¹⁰

Exposed earth, the result of newly dug canals, was also suggested as a cause of the epidemic. During this period there were new excavations for the basin of the Carondelet Canal, there was dredging going on in the Bank Canal, ditches were being deepened between Conti and Common streets, and there were a large number of excavations throughout the city to receive gas and water pipes.¹¹ Dr. Bennet Dowler had noted the coincidence of a similar situation during the yellow fever epidemic of 1796. The original basin of the Carondelet Canal had just been excavated at the time of the earlier epidemic.

In 1852, however, it was Dr. Dowler who declared that there was "but one certain method of escaping yellow fever in New Orleans—incarceration!" This conclusion was drawn from his observation that up until that time inmates of the city prisons had been exempt from yellow fever epidemics, although no particular precautions had been taken in these institutions. Admitting the incidence of yellow fever among inmates in 1853, the doctor still maintained that the numbers affected would not invalidate his general rule.¹²

Most members of the medical profession in New Orleans believed that yellow fever was endemic.¹³ Their opinions indicated that yellow fever originated locally as a result of "putrescent animal and vegetable matter, . . . the filthiness of the city,

⁹ J. S. M'Farlane, "A Review of the Yellow Fever, its Causes &c., With Some Remarks on Hygiene," *The Epidemic Summer* (New Orleans, 1853), v.

¹⁰ New Orleans *Bulletin*, July 12, 1853, quoted in "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *DeBow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 601.

¹¹ Barton, *Report Upon the Sanitary Condition of New Orleans*, 313.

¹² Bennet Dowler, *Tableau of the Yellow Fever of 1853, with Topographical, Chronological, and Historical Sketches of the Epidemic of New Orleans Since Their Origin in 1796, Illustrative of the Quarantine Question* (New Orleans, 1854), 27-28.

¹³ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, August 11, 1853.

and its proximity to the swamps." Some presumed that the high temperatures suffered by the city affected the aforementioned factors in a deleterious manner. Thus the majority of the local physicians believed that the fever could not be imported, that it was noncontagious, and that quarantine regulations would be ineffectual. If such reasoning suggested the true causes of yellow fever, citizens of New Orleans could have little hope that there would not be a recurrence of the epidemic in the future. Rather than accept this defeatist attitude the consensus of lay opinion turned to the belief that the malady was "peculiar to the sea-ports . . . in a remarkable degree contagious . . . [and] that its appearance here at present . . . is owing entirely to our unrestricted intercourse with . . . intertropical ports."¹⁴ Demands for a quarantine were strong by the time the epidemic had run its course.

The *Picayune* stated that though the "ordinary yellow fever epidemics" might be of local origin, the epidemic which New Orleans was undergoing in the summer of 1853 was of a "peculiar character" and pointed to several facts to substantiate the claim of its foreign origin. First, the readers were reminded that a vessel from Rio de Janeiro with yellow fever victims aboard had docked in the city earlier in the season. Too, "a certain degree of heat in the atmosphere" which was usually connected with these epidemics had not been evident at the beginning of the current siege. The proponent of the "foreign source" pointed to the fact that for several weeks the epidemic had lingered in the Fourth and the upper part of the First District, and only spread gradually throughout the city after "it had become fatal." If the atmosphere above the entire city had been "pestilential," so the argument ran, the fever would have spread rapidly into all parts of the city. The last and perhaps one of the factors in this epidemic most disturbing to the local population was the fact that children who were born in New Orleans, adult Creoles, and persons who had previously suffered the fever were afflicted in 1853. In earlier epidemics persons in each of these three categories had been presumed immune to the fever, and this was regarded as another point which suggested the foreign origin of the fever in 1853.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Yellow Fever; Its Causes and Consequences: A Series of Articles Published in the New Orleans Bulletin, During the Epidemic of 1853* (New Orleans, 1853), 6-7.

¹⁵ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, September 4, 1853.

It had long been suggested that the "acclimated" were much less susceptible to the disease than the "unacclimated." Some students of the epidemic used the terms "Creole" and "acclimated" as synonymous terms. Others suggested that "city creolism is . . . a more precise and restricted term than acclimation, and denotes immunity from yellow fever, whether transmitted from parents born and resident in the city, or that immunity acquired by long residence, with or without having suffered an attack of the disease." "Country Creoles," who were born in the country parishes, were considered subject to the epidemic if they should enter the city during the prevalence of the fever. Up until 1853, those few of the Creole class who acquired the fever seldom suffered fatal results, but this theory of immunity was challenged after that year. At best, it could be said that Creoles were not so affected by yellow fever as were non-Creoles.¹⁶

Negroes, whether natives of Louisiana or "non-creolized," seldom died from the fever. They were, however, supposedly more susceptible than the whites to cholera. Negro immunity was another factor which could not be explained by the physicians of the day. It was not known "whether this immunity be owing to color, or to an unknown, transmissible and indestructible modification of the constitution originally derived from the climate of Africa, or from anatomical conformation or physiological law, peculiar to the race."¹⁷

Whether as a means of warning its readers against excessive fear or extreme negligence in the face of the trepidations which they faced, or whether it was an attempt to provide some comedy relief we do not know, but the *Daily Delta* ran a series of three character sketches in its columns portraying types of personalities which might be met with at that time. One was the "unacclimated man," who feared he might become a victim of the fever; the second, the "acclimated man" who had absolutely no fear of the fever; and the third, "the anti-panic man" who complained of the truth being published in the press.

The "unacclimated man" could easily be recognized by his "nervousness of manner" when he walked rapidly through the streets "casting furtive glances behind and around him, as if suspecting an attack from some unseen enemy." He did not enter

¹⁶ Dowler, *Tableau of the Yellow Fever of 1853*, 33-37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

into conversations lest he hear some disheartening news, and omitted the obituary notices and Board of Health reports in his hurried perusal of the newspapers. To his family and friends in distant places he wrote affectionate letters declaring that he stood alone in the "desolating pestilence—that they must not be surprised to hear that he has fallen victim to the prevailing epidemic." When his morale reached its nadir, he ordered "*an ante prandium*, which renders him more comfortable, jocular, hopeful and controversial." At this point he became an authority on the subject, declaring the sole cause to be the filth in the streets. The local physicians, he declared, were "a set of grannies," but he knew the panacea.

He has his mantel-piece covered with bottles of *Poudre de Charbon*, *Vegetable-Medicinal du Docteur Belloc*, and other infallible remedies. At home he has a large tub constantly filled with water, with a pitcher near to pour it upon him—an idea for which he is indebted to Dr. Dalton; also an immense mustard plaster, four feet square, and a pair of drawers composed of the same unfailing irritant, recommended by Dr. Dowler; also several gallon bottles of quinine, prescribed by Dr. Wedderburn; and a half-peck of blue mass, prescribed by Dr. Crockett.

Every morning and night after saying his prayers, he carefully reads Dr. Coxe's directions to the unacclimated. In society his manners are quite jolly at times, as if he was trying to be merry at somebody's expense,—but now and then a dark cloud passes over his face, and shadows his thoughts quite perceptibly. He grows indignant, however, at the villainous habit peculiar to New Orleans, of the undertakers' making such a parade of their coffins; they might observe a little decency in such serious matters. He can't see, too, why they should have such long funeral processions, and why the unfortunate victims cannot be quietly housed without such devilishly disagreeable solemnities.¹⁸

In contrast, the "acclimated man" walked the streets of the city with a swagger and seemed oblivious to the odors from the filth and offal of the streets. He had no sympathy for the unacclimated and "pooh, pooh[ed] at the yellow fever," as being "a mere nothing." Mortality figures meant nothing to him and New Orleans continued to be, for him, the healthiest and best city in the world. He could produce a string of statistics to prove it. Having had the yellow fever in 1848, he was an authority on the disease which he though less dangerous than almost any

¹⁸ New Orleans Daily Delta, July 29, 1853.

physical ailment one might mention. Responsibility for the epidemic, he thought, should be shifted from New Orleans to those foreign immigrants who had swarmed into his beloved city. "Being native and to the manner born, he has rather an affection for the antique heaps of dirt he has been accustomed to see in the streets, looking upon them rather as monuments of affection to the memories of a long line of Street Commissioners."¹⁹

Of similar ilk, the "anti-panic man" did not recognize the signs of bereavement on the doors of homes throughout the city. His anguish was turned toward the local newspapers for publishing the mortality rates of the city. After all, he might have owned some vacant lots in the city which doubtless could have been sold to strangers with wealth and capital to invest. These strangers might have been attracted to the Crescent City if the true state of the city could only be concealed from the world at large.²⁰

Causes of the epidemic and its effect upon the population were not the only subjects of discussion in the beleaguered city. Cures and remedies of almost every imaginable type were suggested by both the professional and the lay person throughout the epidemic summer. Advertisements of patent medicines in that day, as this, announced particular tonics as *the* panacea. Physicians from the country parishes published letters prescribing "simple cures," one of which suggested that the bowels be emptied by an injection of salt and water, and a mustard plaster be applied to the stomach and liver.²¹ An Italian arrived from the West Indies suggesting inoculation against the fever, but "finding no encouragement, he left the city with the heavy heart of Him who lamented over Jerusalem that she would not be saved." Many suggested the burning of tar and the shooting of cannons. Complainants charged that there was never enough tar burning at one time to be of any benefit, and the cannon shots designed to disturb the atmosphere only disturbed the infirm.²²

If it were possible patients were attended by physicians who were of the same nationality. The treatments were varied and as an observer later reported:

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, August 1, 1853.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, August 13, 1853.

²¹ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, August 30, 1853.

²² Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 259, 152.

We witnessed, equally without comment, the Spanish physician, who gave to his patients, on the first day of convalescence, the juice of fresh oysters; the German, who after the first course of medicine, when the patients desired food, gave them successfully strong fluid nourishment; another, who prescribed hard-boiled eggs as the most nutritious and digestible in a more advanced stage of convalescence; the French physicians, of equal success, with hot drinks and cold drinks, close covering or no covering at all on the patient; [and] him who administered strychnine with reported success.²³

By the first of September it seemed that the various treatments were somewhat more successful. Today one might surmise that this had been effected by a process of trial and error, but one contemporary observer declared that this success was due to the stronger "force of the wind from the west and north." However, this meteorological determinist did add that any theory concerning yellow fever was problematical and that the "physicians have been so long confounded to find one, that they allow themselves to be tossed upon every theory that is floated before them." Some had placed faith in a rainy season, others in a dry season; some in a low stage of the river, others in a high stage. Whatever the theory, its fallacy could be indicated by exceptions in at least one of the yellow fever epidemics which New Orleans had suffered in the past.²⁴

Praises were heaped upon the medical profession of New Orleans for their ministrations, but there was criticism of the large number of "parchment M. D.'s who are licensed to kill." In one letter to the editor of the *Daily Crescent*, the writer suggested that if burial certificates were examined one would find that some of these incapable physicians had lost all of their patients. While praising competent members of the "medical faculty," as members of the medical profession were known at that time, the writer declared that although it had been the "fashion to make the 'fool of the family' a student (!) of medicine, and the many rival medical colleges grant[ed] diplomas to all who pay for the course of lectures," the time had come when measures should be taken to prevent improperly trained persons from attending the sick.²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 264-65.

²⁵ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 30, 1853.

While debates as to the causes and cures of yellow fever continued long after the epidemic period there were those, other than physicians, who were primarily concerned with the more immediate necessity of alleviating the suffering of the fever victims. Foremost of the associations formed to come to the assistance of those in need were the "Samaritans" and the "Young Men's Howard Association." The Samaritans were a group of middle-aged business men, less than thirty in number. Though they visited the sick, engaged nurses, and aided the poor financially, they also engaged a group of younger men as assistants. These assistants, who received compensation, served as nurses and incurred the more arduous duties.²⁶

The far-famed and more active organization, the Howard Association, was a chartered society which had been organized in 1837.²⁷ Composed primarily of clerks, they gave their services freely and without recompense for the relief of the sick. While the Samaritans gave succor to those who came to them, the Howards went in search of those who needed assistance.²⁸

Even before the presence of the epidemic had been officially admitted, the Howard Association had appointed apothecaries to fill prescriptions without charge for those who received aid from the group. Twenty physicians immediately offered their services gratis to the organization. By the time the epidemic had reached its climax there were more medical volunteers than the needs of the Association required. At the outset there was only \$5,000 in the treasury of the society, but on the first day that appeals were made to the general public for contributions, the Howards received \$15,000.²⁹ To this, on July 18, the Board of Assistant Aldermen added \$1,000 "for the purchase of medicines to be used for the benefit of the destitute sick during the ensuing summer, should the state of the public health require it."³⁰ This was only the beginning, for the organization was soon to command a national reputation, foster similar benevolent societies elsewhere, and receive financial assistance from all parts of the country.

Beginning on July 20, the names and addresses of the members were published in the newspapers and "persons requiring

²⁶ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 18.

²⁷ Erasmus D. Fenner, *History of the Epidemic Yellow Fever at New Orleans, La., in 1853* (New York, 1854), 69.

²⁸ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-23.

³⁰ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 19, 1853.

relief" were requested to apply to the member nearest the residence of the patient.³¹ Four days later another group of members were listed by residential districts with the announcement that these men would accept donations to the organization.³² These notices appeared in print throughout the summer.

A series of notices in the daily press also listed the names of physicians on whom patients under the charge of the Association might call. Inasmuch as the Howards did not expect physicians to volunteer services to the exclusion of their "pay-patients," those physicians with the widest practice were relieved by physicians who had fewer regular patients. This latter group, composed largely of young doctors, received from \$100 to \$300 per month and the use of a cab from the Howard Association. Not only was this work considered good experience for the younger members of the profession, but for some these services meant the foundation of their later practice.³³

Not content with their service to New Orleans proper, the Howard Association authorized physicians and apothecaries in Algiers, Gretna, and McDonoghville to prescribe for the poor in those areas, promising the professional men that they would be reimbursed from the funds of the Association.³⁴ As soon as the fever abated in New Orleans the members were to extend their services to the neighboring parishes and states.

Constant calls on the services of these men continued throughout the epidemic period. When a member was absent his place would be taken by one of the numerous applicants for membership in the organization. Such a person would serve as an "assistant." Many of these resigned from the organization after a short probation because they had not the strength to fulfill the demands made on them. These assistants enjoyed all of the privileges of membership in the Howard Association except the power to vote. This privilege was reserved for the thirty members required by the constitution of the group.

Promises to pay, or "bons" as they were known, were printed on cards and distributed by Association members in amounts ranging from fifty cents to one dollar. Less valuable tickets

³¹ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, July 20, 1853.

³² *Ibid.*, July 24, 1853.

³³ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 131-32.

³⁴ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, August 26, 1853.

entitled the bearer to a ten-cent piece of ice or twenty cents worth of beef. These cards were accepted as cash throughout the city, payment being made by the treasurer of the Howard Association. Groceries were also ordered for the needy sick on a weekly basis to the extent of twenty-five to seventy-five cents per day. Spirituous liquors were not included in the rations furnished by the Association, but "the French emigre . . . was allowed his accustomed bottle of *vin ordinaire* and the German his potation of lager."³⁵

That the good offices of the members were taken advantage of is suggested in a plea which one of them made to the editor of the *Daily Delta*:

Please state for the information of all interested, that the duties of the members of the Howard Association are restricted by their Constitution, and charter from the State to taking care of the 'indigent sick, particularly in times of epidemic.' Beyond this we are not a charitable body and cannot go.

There is not a member but is daily applied to for charity of all kinds and character—for money to pay for back rent, to take the applicant to the West, North, or Europe, or for the support of large families. If all these demands were satisfied, a half million dollars would not carry us through. All calls made upon us, that come within our province shall receive prompt attention, and their every necessary want supplied, and to do this from present indications, more than \$100,000 will be required. We have had over 6000 cases and have a fair prospect for as many more ere the 1st of October.³⁶

In the latter part of August there was some criticism, not so much of the Howard Association itself, but of the limited scope of its activities as defined by its constitution. Since most of the financial aid from throughout the nation was being directed into the hands of the Howards, there was a plea for those who had become needy as a result of the epidemic. Concern was evidenced for the hungry, for the widows and orphans, as well as for the sick.³⁷

The *Picayune* came to the defense of the benevolent group and remarked that the complaints had become common since the

³⁵ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 125-26.

³⁶ New Orleans *Daily Delta*, August 24, 1853.

³⁷ New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, September 1, 1853.

Howards began receiving large sums of money from contributors. Prior to that, however, "no one dreamed of saying aught that was not in praise of the Association." The editorial did go on to suggest that the Association include more than thirty persons in its organization, and that it should inquire of other charitable groups in the city if they were in need of funds. Inasmuch as the Association was the agent for the disbursement of money from all over the Union, another suggestion proffered by the *Picayune* called for a weekly publication "for general satisfaction here and abroad of the contributors, the manner in which these funds are employed."³⁸ To this request the Association replied that it could not spare the time to make these reports, but promised to make a statement of all receipts and expenditures once its work had been completed.³⁹

According to its promise, the Howard Association made a public report in December, 1853. Total receipts from all sources amounted to \$228,927.46, while the total expenditures were \$159,190.32. The surplus was invested by the Association to carry on its work in future epidemics. Handling a total of 11,088 yellow fever patients, cures were effected in 8,146 cases. Thus there was an average expenditure of \$14.33 per patient. Of the total, 4,845 of the patients were born in Ireland and 2,890 in Germany.⁴⁰ Only 716 of the patients attended by the Howards were born in the United States. Slightly more than half of the Howard patients were females, an interesting fact in that women were regarded as less susceptible to yellow fever. Women, according to the suggested explanation, preferred the Howard infirmaries to Charity Hospital or one of the infirmaries which were established by the city officials.⁴¹

Among services offered by physicians through many agencies other than the Howard Association, outstanding work was done at Charity Hospital.⁴² Many Irish and German immigrants, however, did not wish to be hospitalized. Their refusal in the first stages of the disease often meant that they were taken to the hospital only after there was no hope that cures might be effected. It was for this reason, according to the *Delta*, that there was

³⁸ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, September 4, 1853.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, September 6, 1853.

⁴⁰ The 1850 census listed 20,200 natives of Ireland and 11,220 German-born persons living in New Orleans. *Statistical View of the United States, being a Compendium of the Seventh Census, 1850* (Washington, D. C., 1854), 399.

⁴¹ Dowler, *Tableau of the Yellow Fever of 1853*, 31.

⁴² Fenner, *History of the Epidemic Yellow Fever*, 70.

such a high percentage of deaths at Charity Hospital.⁴³ Other would-be patients turned up at this hospital who mistakenly thought they had become victims of the fever. Their fear of contagion had led them to believe that simple colds or other complaints were symptoms of yellow fever.⁴⁴ Besides the infirmaries set up by the city and the Howard Association, the United States Marine Hospital also received yellow fever cases.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most bizarre of these infirmaries was the Globe Ball Room. Described as a building which had been used for years "as the saturnalia of the depraved portions" of the population, it was eagerly accepted by the Howards to house victims of the fever. The ballroom was partitioned by a canvas cloth to provide privacy for male and female patients and the barroom was divided similarly for convalescents. A third room was "appropriated to patients *in extremis*, or when they became unmanageable in their cots or disturbing to others by frequent vomitings or ravings." An adjoining building was used for administrative purposes and nurses' quarters.

Three times as many nurses as were needed made applications to serve at the Globe. Twelve were chosen, their selection being made on the basis of their physical appearance and their fluency in both German and French. Their salaries ranged from thirty to forty dollars per month, but these individuals never proved entirely satisfactory. Although patients were requested to check their valuables with the clerk of admissions, they lost personal belongings as a result of theft. Some of the thievery was committed by the nurses. At one point all of the nurses on the night shift became inebriated and fell asleep. Following this episode the nurses were required to do all of their sleeping during the day while volunteers took over the daytime nursing chores. One of the members of the Howard Association describes these volunteers:

Ladies of mature age, and young ladies, in many instances, of respectable Creole families, with quadroons in easy circumstances, presented themselves all of the day, begging permission to nurse the sick. Some . . . made themselves useful in carrying out prescriptions and doing menial service to the sick. After a stay of two or three hours they would leave, and be replaced by others. Some came daily, others at

⁴³ New Orleans *Daily Delta*, July 31, 1853.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1853.

⁴⁵ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, September 3, 1853.

intervals of a few days, as if the duties were repugnant, and they were doing them from a sense of charity or for a penance. . . . Nearly all, upon taking off their bonnets, threw a veil over the head, which partly or entirely concealed the face. Whether this was in imitation of the first comers or a conventional type of volunteers to the sick, I could not learn. I rarely saw their faces . . . they seemed desirous to destroy all identity with those 'acts of goodness which themselves requite.'⁴⁶

Most of the Globe patients had been treated for several days in their homes before they entered the infirmary. Of the 338 cases admitted up to September 12, 156 died. Some persons near the point of death were sent from boardinghouses which did not intend to pay burial expenses. Others were brought in by cabmen, who "to obtain the fare of transportation to the infirmary, hunted up cases at the beer-shops and on the Levee."⁴⁷

Some two blocks away the Howard Association set up a convalescent infirmary in a building loaned by the Perseverance Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. Most of the women in this infirmary were domestic servants and the problem of job-hunting upon their recovery was a serious consideration. On their behalf, the *Picayune* suggested that "persons in want of female servants would be performing an act of charity by visiting the infirmary and making a selection there. It would quiet much dread of the future in the breasts of these poor women."⁴⁸

Victims of the epidemic were not confined to those who actually acquired the fever for there were many orphans as a result of the plague. Frequently neighbors or friends of deceased persons took orphan children into their homes, and in some cases these children were to be reared and educated as adopted sons and daughters. More often, they were to be brought up as "apprentices, servants, or worse," and the Howard Association "could not watch too closely these children snatchers."⁴⁹ Before the close of the epidemic summer, however, the established orphan asylums of the city were filled beyond capacity. The Howard Association was forced to resort to the policy of placing the older children in the hands of any "respectable applicant who would promise to bring them up properly to some trade or service." Younger

⁴⁶ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 162-64, 193.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁴⁸ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, September 2, 1853.

⁴⁹ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 290.

children were boarded with nurses at the rate of \$12 to \$15 per month. As the numbers increased other temporary asylums were established in each district of the city. These, along with two asylums set up by the Board of Health and placed under the direction of the Howards, housed from forty to seventy children each. Each asylum was staffed by a matron, six to ten nurses, and three or four servants. Persons who brought the children sometimes did not even know their names, and many of the children were too young to know. Thus many of these unfortunates grew to adulthood without knowing their nationality or parentage.⁵⁰

Another temporary asylum was established at the Christian Brothers' School and housed 130 children, from twelve days to twelve years of age. This institution received financial aid from the city, but was supervised by the ladies of St. Vincent de Paul.⁵¹

Other charitable work was done by a group of wealthy and socially prominent ladies in the city who were known as "Les Dames de la Providence." These ladies, in groups of three or four, called at various houses to comfort the sick. Perhaps the services of no group exceeded those of the Sisters of Charity. Their deeds led one New Orleans Protestant to declare that "the institution of the Sisters of Charity is the triumph of the Catholic religion. It is practical."⁵²

No type of nurse, however, was considered more desirable for a yellow fever patient than a free woman of color. There were those who maintained that the full-time presence of an experienced nurse was more important in yellow fever cases than frequent calls from a physician. These colored nurses were considered to be the most experienced, and also the most exorbitant in their demands for financial remuneration. Although their fees might run as high as \$10 per day, they often gave their services gratuitously to those whom they considered respectable but were unable to pay.⁵³

Tragedy was not encountered only in the homes and hospitals visited by those who served the fever victims. The stark realities of the city's plight were brought to a focus for those who witnessed the disorganization and improprieties within the gates of

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 280-81.

⁵¹ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, August 27, 1853.

⁵² Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 194-96.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 239-40.

the cemeteries. In no cemetery was the turmoil more complete than in that of the Fourth District. Unburied bodies there led the authorities to order all corpses sent to other places of interment, but private individuals continued to bring their dead and, since it was a public cemetery, they could not be refused. Indifferent to the calamitous scene on the afternoon of August 8, children played in "joyous merriment" at the entrance gate while an old woman attempted to sell ice cream to "passers-by, who had to hold camphor to their noses to avoid fainting, from the odor." Unburied coffins of unplanned boards and painted a gloomy black attracted swarms of flies. Inside the cemetery the Negro chain-gangmen were employed in placing the coffins in graves not more than a foot deep. White laborers had been employed originally to do this work, but they now refused to work for the \$5.00 an hour offered. No one volunteered to take their places and the work was carried on by the Negro prisoners only "by liberal and frequent potations of whiskey."⁵⁴

A vivid description of the scene was recorded by a correspondent of the *Daily Crescent*:

In every street were long processions, tramping to the solemn music of funeral marches. In the countenances of plodding passengers were the lines of anxiety and grief, and many a door was festooned with black and white hangings, the voiceless witnesses of wailing and sorrow. On the one hand, slowly swept the long corteges of the wealthy, nodding with plumes and drawn by prancing horses, rejoicing in their funeral vanities; on another, the hearse of the citizen-soldier, preceded by measured music, enveloped in warlike panoply, and followed by the noisy tread of men under arms; while there, again, the pauper was trundled to his long home on a rickety cart, with a boy for a driver, who whistled as he went.

At the gathering points carriages accumulated, and vulgar teamsters, as they jostled each other in the press, mingled the coarse jest with the ribald oath; no sound but of profane malediction and of riotous mirth, the clang of whip-thongs and the rattle of wheels. . . . Inside, corpses piled in pyramids, and without the gates, old and withered crones and fat huxter-women, fretting in their own grease, dispensing ice-creams and confections, and brushing away, with brooms made of bushes, the green bottleflies that hov-

⁵⁴ New Orleans *Daily Delta*, August 9, 1853.

ered on their merchandise, and that anon buzzed away to drink dainty inhalations from the green and festering corpses.⁵⁵

Lack of respect for the deceased was not only evident at the cemeteries, but also in a room at one infirmary where the dead were laid out. The men working here threw open the doors to the street in order to have more light and air, and each morning a curious crowd gathered to see the dead placed in their coffins. Mutterings among the onlookers were directed at the men thus employed for their carelessness in "slinging the corpse into the coffin," and in putting others in without the covering of a sheet. Evidently the morticians had neither the time nor the inclination to replace sheets which sometimes fell from the bodies. Rumors of disrespect for the dead caused the crowd to grow so large one morning that thereafter the dead were placed in coffins immediately after death.⁵⁶

Some of the dead were buried without clerical attendance, and there were others whose funeral services were conducted by laymen. The numerous calls upon the ministers and priests of the city made it impossible for these men to give religious succor to all, and rarely did the clergy have time to accompany funeral corteges to the cemeteries. Usually services were held in various chapels for the Catholic victims, and the chapel "contiguous to the grave-yard on Rampart Street was a thronged receptacle of the dead and their mourners during the day until after dark." Most of the clergy of all sects received praise for their activities throughout the epidemic period. Few left the city in search of immunity, and "the examples were numerous of martyrdom to their excess of zeal."⁵⁷

Clerical consolation was not confined to attendance on individuals. Bishop Leonidas K. Polk of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana prepared a prayer which he recommended to all of the churches in his diocese. While Episcopal New Orleans prayed for deliverance from a plague which their leader proclaimed a form of "fatherly correction," they asked that it also might impress upon them "a sense of our dependence upon" Him. In addition to the Bishop's prescribed prayer, the Rector of Christ

⁵⁵ New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, August 11, 1853.

⁵⁶ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 230-31.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 259-60.

Church on Canal Street set Friday, August 25, as a day of prayer and humiliation. Services were set for 11 A.M., and it was announced that the seats in the church would be "free to all who wish to be present at this solemn and effecting ceremony." The Presbyterians of the city organized a "Union Prayer Meeting," which was held at the Second Presbyterian Church on Prytania and Calliope streets at five o'clock each afternoon, beginning August 23. Members of other congregations and the general public were invited.⁵⁸

Following in the wake of the clerical leaders, Mayor Abdiel D. Crossman noted that it was "usual for cities in such visitations and with such belief to set apart a day for the general voice to rise in supplication to Almighty God," and proclaimed September 2 as a day set aside for that purpose. The Mayor called on the public to close their places of business and to refrain from their usual occupational callings on that day in order to give thanks for the assistance which the city had received from throughout the nation and to pray for deliverance.⁵⁹ On the day following this observance the *Picayune* was able to report that the "request was most fully complied with."⁶⁰

Gratitude of the populace to their fellow-citizens who rendered public service was not always extended to the city officials. It seemed as though every city official, including the Mayor, was held responsible to some extent for the epidemic. Politics was not forgotten by the *Courier*, a French paper, which supported the City Council but poured its wrath on the head of the Whig Mayor. A new point of criticism was raised by the French editors who declared that there were forces at work in the city which were to be dreaded more than the filth of the streets or the putrescence of the graveyards. Reference was made to the "swarms of medicasters, empirics, charlatans, Raspailists, homoeopaths, [and] Indian doctors . . . who filled the city and the newspapers with their nostrums and lying placards, professing to be able to cure the most virulent cases of yellow fever."⁶¹

The public, however, was more critical of those city officials who simply fled the city when they began to fear for their lives

⁵⁸ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, August 24, 1853.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, September 1, 1853.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, September 3, 1853.

⁶¹ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 625.

and those of members of their families. The Board of Aldermen adjourned in July until the following October, and left the city with no responsible agency to care for public health. On July 24, the Assistant Board of Aldermen also adjourned until October, but not before it had set up a Board of Health. There were charges that the Board of Health was established too late to accomplish much in preventing the spread of the epidemic, and that it had been organized to satisfy the demands of the public rather "than from any settled conviction of its utility." Further criticism suggested that the \$10,000 assigned to this agency might be squandered or that it might be used to enrich a new "horde of officials who will look more to their own enrichment than to the relief of the afflicted." The Mayor was named president of the new Board of Health, and he was assisted by a secretary, a port physician, and 15 health wardens.⁶²

Prior to the organization of the Board of Health, and before the epidemic was officially announced, the press directed invectives at the Street Commissioner and charged that the streets were in a filthy state. Public clamor reached a point that the Street Commissioner was impeached by the Assistant Board of Aldermen,⁶³ but the impeachment was later withdrawn after it was proved that the Commissioner had not been furnished with the necessary means to keep the city clean. Writing in *DeBow's Review* in the following winter, one observer charged that "the whole thing was a mere *ruse* to deceive the people, and make them believe that the Aldermen had done their duty."⁶⁴

By the time the epidemic had reached its climax much of the criticism of the city officials and the Howards had diminished, and the press admitted that the various agencies were exerting "themselves unremittingly in the discharge of their responsible and difficult duties." The cemeteries were being operated in a more orderly manner and there seemed to be a satisfactory supply of tar to be burned.⁶⁵ Perhaps the increased funds which were coming into the city from throughout the nation, as well as better organization on the part of the city fathers, made these commendations possible.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 609-14.

⁶³ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, July 21, 1853.

⁶⁴ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 611.

⁶⁵ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, August 21, 1853.

Once the Howard Association began receiving funds from such distant points as St. Louis, Washington, New York, Baltimore, and Charleston, facilities for aiding the sick were improved to a large extent. Throughout the epidemic months the *Daily Picayune* printed expressions of "Sympathy for the Sufferers," which were copied from the papers of distant cities.

Appeals were made by the local press to citizens of New Orleans who were absent from the city. Those who were able to spend the summer in safer localities were urged to aid their fellow-townsmen who remained in New Orleans. This group, which had no fear for its physical well-being and had not expended any personal effort for the relief of sufferers, was expected to at least be willing to lend financial support to the cause. Some appeals urged that money be sent to the Howard Association, and others that donations should be forwarded to the Mayor to be divided between the various benevolent societies.⁶⁶ In an appeal to the rector of the Calvary Church in New York City, a local minister wrote that, while others might imply there was no existing danger in New Orleans, "there is really at this moment raging one of the most fearful epidemics that was ever known."

Through the medium of the *New York Journal of Commerce* on August 5, the Howards made a direct appeal to New Orleans citizens then residing in the East. This entreaty described the fever as being of a type more malignant than any known before, and included an exaggerated statement claiming that 70 per cent of those persons who contracted the fever were dying.⁶⁷ Just as individuals who remained in the city gave freely of their time, contributions by residents in the East were forthcoming. In addition, there were the generous donations on the part of the citizens of other cities. One meeting at the Astor House in New York City netted more than \$4,000.⁶⁸ Nearer home, the Whig Club in West Baton Rouge announced that it would meet at Hebert's coffee house to make plans to aid the Howard Association. "The Democrats are also invited," the announcement added.⁶⁹

While contact with the outside world was indeed beneficial from a financial standpoint, a great deal of confusion resulted

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, August 10, 1853.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, August 13, 1853.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, August 17, 1853.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, August 19, 1853.

from individual reports to friends and relatives in other parts of the country. Although general reference to the tragedy suffered in the epidemic may not have been exaggerated in this correspondence, many persons took the occasion to give reports on the physical health of individuals. Often there was no succeeding report to announce their convalescence. The *Picayune* cautioned that "the alarm and distress these reports cause among the absent families and friends . . . can be easily conceived, and are . . . frequently occasioned by irresponsible correspondents."⁷⁰

A careful reading of New Orleans newspapers for the six-week period beginning June 1, 1853, will lead to a strong suspicion that the press and mercantile interests of the city had effected an understanding to omit any mention of situations which might prove pernicious to the commercial prosperity which the city enjoyed in this era. Local newspapers were so reticent about publishing reports concerning cases of yellow fever in the Crescent City that the first printed information on the presence of the disease often came back to the city by way of the pages of the country papers. Those who defended this negligence on the part of the local press declared that, since New Orleans was a commercial port, nothing should be done which might injure trade.

Those who censured the dilatory policy of the local newspapers emphasized the undesirable effects. Lack of publicity meant that large numbers of persons, who might have left the city once the true extent of the situation had become known, remained only to expose themselves to the fever. It was also charged that physicians were hesitant to discuss the existence of yellow fever cases for fear they might incur the wrath of special interests.⁷¹

While the newspapers remained reticent throughout the month of June, a letter to the editor of the *Daily Picayune*, published June 23, indicates that the population of the city was showing more concern. An anonymous contributor called attention to the fact that "Madam Rumor has given rise to the fancied existence of yellow fever in this city to a very great extent." Although admitting that there were four known cases in the city, the writer declared this number not excessive for that time of the year. The correspondent then went on to criticize the publication of the

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, September 3, 1853.

⁷¹ Fenner, *History of the Epidemic Yellow Fever*, 5.

number of deaths in the city each week. These reports, the letter charged, had induced many people "to leave the city sooner than convenient, in order to avoid a danger which does not exist."⁷²

Even though the press continued to publish the weekly reports, and announced nine deaths as a result of yellow fever for the week ending June 26, it refrained from comment and turned its attention to an alleged Negro insurrection plot and the still "greater humbug, the monster steam balloon of M. Petin, who announced that he would positively make an ascension on the 5th of July."⁷³ Shortly thereafter, however, occasional notices of the filth in the streets and of the heavy rains throughout the city were printed. Public wrath was directed toward the contractors who were responsible for the cleanliness of the city, and the *Daily Delta* of July 7 reported that these men had been arraigned and heavily fined for non-performance of their duties.⁷⁴

Finally, on July 13, the situation had reached the extent that the *Orleanian* announced, "there is no disguising it, nor endeavoring longer to keep secret the advent of our olden enemy—the saffron-visaged gentleman, ycelpt 'Yellow Jack.'" The editor, however, attempted to palliate the true conditions by reminding the reader that it was "the commencement of the sickly season," and by claiming that there was no epidemic in New Orleans. Despite the assurances of the *Orleanian* editor, for the week ending July 16 there were 204 deaths from yellow fever in the city. Other metropolitan papers maintained their silence and some refused to publish any comments on the state of health in the city, but thousands of people sought refuge elsewhere. Those who remained complained of the apathy of the city officials in failing to alleviate the unsanitary conditions of the city streets.⁷⁵

At this juncture the Howard Association, which had refrained from publicizing its charitable acts upon the request of the city's business men and newspaper editors, made public its plans of assistance for the poor who were unable to obtain proper

⁷² New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, June 23, 1853.

⁷³ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 598.

⁷⁴ New Orleans *Daily Delta*, July 7, 1853.

⁷⁵ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 603.

medical care. The Association also urged "the community at large not to neglect the ordinary domestic remedies, such as mustard foot baths, warm drinks, &c."⁷⁶

Within the next two weeks the city press was obliged to take cognizance of the alarming proportions to which the epidemic had grown. On July 24 the *Daily Delta* announced, "it is with deep sorrow and pain that we feel bound to admit that the Yellow Fever prevails in this city to an extent equal, if not surpassing almost any previous year of its history." That journal then went on to excuse the newspapers of the city for not having previously announced the state of affairs. It placed the blame on the non-existence of any city agency which had always made such a pronouncement in the past. Though not admitting any delinquency in this respect, the *Delta* suggested that the press would "certainly be deserving of severe reprobation" if it continued to disguise the prevalence of the epidemic. At this late date the *Delta* now declared that "when an evil is so glaring and unavoidable, the most honest and manly way to deal with it, is to look it in the face, and go courageously and earnestly to work to arrest its progress."⁷⁷

As soon as the prevalence of the epidemic was discussed openly in the daily press the question of quarantine was raised and continued to be a subject of discussion during the following year. When the Board of Health was set up in the latter part of July a quarantine was established at Slaughterhouse Point. Here a foreign vessel coming into the city was boarded by a physician to inspect the ship for possible cases of the fever. The ship, on payment of a \$5.00 fee, was then allowed to proceed to the city with a permit from the inspecting physician. This quarantine was described as ridiculous, because the city was already in the midst of the epidemic and such a move was "like shutting the stable door after the horse was stolen."⁷⁸ As the number of fever victims increased, there were calls for more rigid quarantine laws. Public opinion seemed to be moving in this direction, and strict quarantine measures in other cities were cited as successful preventive measures.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, July 16, 1853.

⁷⁷ New Orleans *Daily Delta*, July 24, 1853.

⁷⁸ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 614.

⁷⁹ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, August 11, 1853.

After the epidemic had passed its height, Captain Henry L. Smith of the United States Engineers offered the use of Fort Jackson as a reception center for immigrants arriving from abroad. A similar offer was made by the general commanding Fort St. Philip. The city authorities accepted both of these gestures and preparations were made to send beds and other necessary articles to these points. Use of Fort Jackson for these purposes was to be made at once, and instructions were issued to captains of vessels at the Balize that they were to debark their passengers at the fort.⁸⁰

By the end of the first week in September there were signs that the fever was abating in the city. The populace was not willing, however, that strangers should enter the city, because they might "furnish new fuel to the still slumbering embers of the disease." Fort Jackson was ready to accommodate 500 immigrants; and other visitors were warned to stay away from the city until the first frost had fallen.⁸¹ Toward the middle of the month the incidence of the fever had decreased to an extent that the various temporary infirmaries were closed and all patients were directed to the Charity Hospital.⁸²

Before the epidemic had run its course in New Orleans there were reports of its existence across nearby Lake Pontchartrain and on the Gulf Coast. On August 19 the *Picayune* announced that these reports were merely rumors and advised its readers to "go to any of our watering places that you may like. They are all healthy."⁸³ Many persons left New Orleans in search of immunization, but "hundreds" of them died on the way, and others found that they had become victims of the fever after arriving at their points of destination. Before the summer was over, these so-called "safe" towns on the Gulf Coast and up and down the Mississippi and Red rivers were also faced with the fever in epidemic proportions.⁸⁴ As the fever declined in New Orleans it was definitely on the increase in the country parishes, and many people from the rural areas of the state moved to the city in an effort to avoid contact with the fever, and according to one phy-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, September 2, 1853.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, September 8, 1853.

⁸² *Ibid.*, September 14, 1853.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, August 19, 1853.

⁸⁴ "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 631.

sician, "to the discredit of the doctrine of contagion, escaped."⁸⁵ On October 13, the Board of Health announced that yellow fever no longer existed in New Orleans as an epidemic, and the *Picayune* took the occasion of this announcement "to welcome our absent friends back to their homes and to see the business of the city again in the full tide of its wonted prosperity."⁸⁶

Once the epidemic was over there were demands that action be taken to permanently rid the city of its unhealthy conditions. The *Picayune* demanded that "every local sanitary measure which art and science can suggest be put into vigorous action."⁸⁷ Governor P. O. Hebert, in his message to the joint session at the opening meeting of the Louisiana legislature the following January, declared that "the sanitary condition of the city of New Orleans is no longer a question of local interest," because railroads would soon connect every village of Louisiana with the "great emporium."⁸⁸ Local physicians who made studies of the epidemic were unanimous in agreeing that New Orleans should "take stringent measures for sanitary reform."⁸⁹ Reference to filth in the city was made throughout the epidemic summer, but perhaps none was more revolting than the account of dead dogs. Every summer New Orleans rid itself of stray dogs by distributing poisoned sausage to these undesirables. The *Orleanian* of July 23, reported that "dead dogs, bloated to an unusual size, and roasting in the sun, can be perceived on our streets, or float in dozens on the river, into some nook or eddy, where they putrify and rot."⁹⁰

Louisiana legislators did not accept the Governor's challenge to make the sanitary condition of New Orleans a special problem of the state's governing body, but turned their direction to possible quarantine laws. The Joint Committee on Public Health studied the problem and the majority reported in favor of quarantine laws,⁹¹ but a minority in the committee felt that such laws would not aid in the protection of health in New Orleans or throughout the state.⁹² This disagreement continued to be

⁸⁵ Dowler, *Tableau of the Yellow Fever of 1853*, 47.

⁸⁶ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, October 14, 1853.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, September 14, 1853.

⁸⁸ *Journal of the Executive Session of the Senate of the State of Louisiana, Second Legislature, First Session, 1854* (New Orleans, 1854), 2.

⁸⁹ Fenner, *History of the Epidemic Yellow Fever*, 6; Barton, *Report Upon the Sanitary Condition of New Orleans*, 219, 348.

⁹⁰ Quoted in "The Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853," *De Bow's Review*, XII (December, 1853), 606.

⁹¹ *Journal of the Executive Session of the Senate of the State of Louisiana, Second Legislature, First Session, 1854*, 52-54.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 54-46.

aired in the legislative halls until the following session. Finally, on March 15, 1855, the legislature passed "An Act to Establish Quarantine for the Protection of the State."⁹³

As the epidemic declined, preparations for the fall business season went on at a hurried pace in the Crescent City. Once the Board of Health gave the all-clear signal, Orleanians swarmed back into the city whose streets were now livened by those who had returned from their "uncomfortable seashore residences, [and] dashed gayly through the streets."⁹⁴ The contrast between New Orleans of August and the city in November might have been recognized by a call at the Globe Ball Room, once again a hall of revelry for those who had no antipathy to people of color. It was "now filled with a tumultuous sound of voices, suffocating fumes of heated liquor, and an atmosphere that dimmed the view, from the dust which the rapid waltz raised from the floor."⁹⁵ New Orleans was alive again.

There had been no seer to comprehend what seemed to be just another suggestion in a newspaper: "Let the swamp in the rear of the city to Lake Pontchartrain be drained, and the land reclaimed, in order that its miasms [*sic*] and mosquitoes may be destroyed."⁹⁶

⁹³ *Acts Passed by the Second Legislature of the State of Louisiana at its Second Session, 1855* (New Orleans, 1855), 471.

⁹⁴ Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan*, 297-98.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁹⁶ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, September 14, 1853.

OLD DAYS ON THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT

by

JOHN SMITH KENDALL

At the beginning of the closing decade of the last century, New Orleans, with a population less than half its present total, supported eight daily newspapers. The Times-Democrat, the Picayune, the New Delta; the French paper L'Abeille, usually referred to as The Bee; and the German daily Deutsche Zeitung, known more familiarly as the Dutch Gazette, were issued in the morning. The States, Item, and the News appeared every weekday afternoon. The wealth and prestige of these publications ranked approximately in the order named, with the News trailing along inconspicuously at the far end of the procession.

Within a year or two, however, this number was reduced by the disappearance of the New Delta. Being a purely political journal, it had no reason for existence once it had achieved the purpose for which it was established—the suppression of the Louisiana Lottery and the election of Murphy J. Foster to the governorship of Louisiana. Thereupon it folded its tent in Natchez Alley, and, almost as unobtrusively as Longfellow's much publicized Arab, silently stole away.

The News lingered a few years longer, and then it, too, vanished into that Limbo where all New Orleans newspapers ultimately disappear. The Dutch Gazette expired quietly at the inception of the first World War. Its proprietor, a man named Hassinger, was unwilling to be identified with a periodical printed in the language of an enemy country, and thought it wise to suspend publication before anything unpleasant happened. The Bee underwent a long, slow, agonizing decline, and was finally absorbed by one of its luckier contemporaries. But the other papers, in spite of consolidations and changes of ownership, may be said to be flourishing lustily today.

All of these papers but two had offices in Camp street, on the so-called "river" side of that busy thoroughfare. The exceptions were the New Delta and the Bee. The former's quarters in Natchez Alley were in an ancient, inconvenient and very dirty structure,

just off Camp street. The Bee, which was published in French, felt that it had to remain in the French Quarter. It was housed in a small, crowded, old-fashioned two-story brick building on Royal street.

The other offices were more commodious, no doubt, but the difference was more in size than in kind. The Picayune, for instance, was domiciled in an edifice erected expressly for its use shortly after the Mexican War and never subsequently modernized. The interior, however, was gradually divided by wood-and-glass partitions into a series of compartments connected by curious, meandering corridors always wrapped in the deepest obscurity. Visitors were constantly losing their way in this maze of passageways and cubby-holes, and having to be rescued by members of the staff, and guided to their destinations. The Times-Democrat was located some sixty or seventy feet away, towards Canal street, in a building previously occupied by an insurance company. It had an ornate white facade, reportedly of marble, crowned by a sort of gable containing a clock that was never known to function.

The States and the Item were established on Camp, between Natchez Alley and Poydras. The Dutch Gazette and the News had quarters just above the latter street, in a two-story brick building demolished some years ago, to make way for the new post office. The Dutch Gazette's editorial rooms were the cleanest, best-lighted and most attractive on Newspaper Row; which perhaps was due to German ideas of neat housekeeping, or perhaps to the fact that the Gazette's staff was too small to make much litter in its well-ordered environment.

The editorial methods and administrative organization of the New Orleans newspapers in the not-so-gay Nineties differed considerably from those now in vogue. Everything was on a small scale. Editorial titles furnished no clue to the functions discharged by their bearers. The managing editor of one morning paper once ruefully remarked that he "neither managed nor edited." On another paper the managing editor's duties were performed by the chief editorial writer; on still another the city editor was expected to attend to all editorial details, from headlining "copy" to superintending the make-up. And on one afternoon paper, if there was anybody who functioned as managing editor, no one was ever able to locate him. There were no assistant editors, no

copy readers, no rewrite men. One telephone in each office was sufficient to meet all requirements. The business staff of even the largest and best equipped of these journals consisted of a couple of book-keepers and one or two counter clerks. One or two men were able to handle all the advertising business that any one of the papers enjoyed.

The reportorial staff on the two leading morning papers did not exceed ten men each, and grew beautifully less on the minor publications, until the Bee managed with two, and the News with one. In the news room the hours were absurdly long, and the work was hard and ill-paid. The reporters were linked in a sort of fraternal affection which is not easy to understand in the present highly competitive day. This feeling was concentrated in each office, so that each city room was, in effect, a little family, the members of which knew one another intimately, shared one another's joys, came to the rescue in times of trouble, and were fiercely loyal to each other and to the paper. They loved the work, and in it found intellectual and perhaps spiritual satisfactions which seem to have disappeared from the profession since their day.

Of these care-free, devoted and customarily impecunious young men, some were brilliantly educated, many were well connected socially, and nearly all of them were more than ordinarily talented. One of the most gifted and attractive of the group was Henry Rightor, of the Times-Democrat. Rightor was born in New Orleans in 1870, and died suddenly in this city of a heart attack, fifty-two years later. His father, Nicholas Rightor, was a distinguished member of the Federal Judiciary in Louisiana. His mother, Justine Scudday, was of mixed French and Irish descent. From her Henry derived the Latin gaiety and Celtic humor that were his outstanding characteristics. His father's family, however, as the name even in its Anglicized form indicates, was Dutch, and it was no doubt from this direction that Henry inherited the solid qualities which, later in life, when he had quitted journalism for commercial pursuits, enabled him to make a respectable success there also.

Henry Rightor was extremely likable, and had hosts of friends in every circle of New Orleans society. Negroes adored him, and that part of the city which residents still call Carrollton, out by the levee, was filled with weeping and wailing when he died. He

belonged to half-a-dozen clubs, including the Lambs' Club, in New York. He was passionately fond of hunting, fishing and all manner of masculine sports and gatherings, yet no man ever endeared himself more to wife and children in all the multifarious ways which only a genuinely home-loving person could know about. He was not much interested in formal religion, but his whole life was colored by the very real Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity. His usual manner was bright and gay, but those who knew him best were always a bit worried when he seemed exceptionally cheerful, for that was the gallant fashion in which he always faced the disappointments and adversities inevitable in the human experience. Perhaps the aptest description of an exceedingly attractive and interesting man was voiced by one of Rightor's business associates at the time of his death, in 1922. "I never knew any one," said this shrewd observer, "who always did everything so beautifully."

Rightor was a true poet. His mind was always thronged with ideas that turned themselves automatically into verse. He never received the recognition which his delightful talent deserved. Perhaps that was because he took himself too lightly; perhaps it was because, in his time, the public was not much concerned about New Orleans, its Creoles, and the things that Rightor liked to write about. Other writers, like George W. Cable, Ruth McEnery Stuart and Grace King, owed their vogue to the interest aroused by the Cotton Centennial Exposition of 1884-85 and the recrudescence of old Civil War controversies which developed a few years later, but all that had evaporated when Henry Rightor and his generation came upon the scene. They wrote as well and about much the same subjects, but they came late to the feast.

Henry Rightor produced two charming little operettas, "The Military Maid," in 1896, and "The Striped Petticoat," in 1898, for both of which Henri Wehrmann, the violinist, supplied some delightful music. They were produced not inadequately at a local amusement park, and ran for a week or two before being consigned to an oblivion from which, let us hope, they will some day be rescued. Rightor also wrote a short farce that was played with fair success over the Orpheum Circuit. He published a tiny volume of epigrams entitled "Harlequinade," and an equally modest volume of poems, "Moons and Marshes," in 1905.

One of Rightor's most pretentious undertakings, however, was the "Standard History of New Orleans," a massive but rather heterogeneous compilation, bound—perhaps not inappropriately—in funeral black. It was not without merit, and is still frequently consulted by people writing about the city. Rightor was drawn into this enterprise in rather an odd way. The northern publishers who projected the book had contracted with a local historian to write and deliver the copy within nine months, but somehow this individual muffed the assignment, and Rightor was asked to take his place. He was given thirty days in which to finish a herculean job, but by calling in a little group of intimates, all more or less active in newspaper work, he managed to accomplish a feat probably unique in the publishing business.

Walter Parker, who was one of Rightor's comrades in those far-off days, tells the story of the "Standard History" in a little book of reminiscences recently printed for private distribution. This is Parker's version:

One evening Henry came in, showing considerable excitement and eagerness, and said to the boys: "Take off your coats. I've a job for all of you. We are going to write a Standard History of New Orleans, get paid for it, but we must deliver the copy within thirty days."

The publisher was in a hole. His selected historian had disappointed him. The time was nearly up for delivery of the book to the subscribers.

Henry, knowing that he could count on the boys, took the contract and guaranteed delivery within a month.

The first night the boys divided the work and assigned the subjects among the eight of them, and until early morning discussed the available sources of information.

Next day all were on the job. A week later chapters, complete, began to be turned in. In a month all were finished and the book went to press. . . .

Probably no other standard history of a city was ever written under such pressure, or such sustained and continuous labor, day and night, for a month, or in so enthusiastic an environment.

But Rightor's real love was journalism. He became a member of the Times-Democrat staff in 1890, and left it seven years later, in consequence of a thoroughly characteristic incident. Sent by his city editor to interview a young woman who had been arrested for some serious offense or other, Henry became inter-

ested in her case. When she took him into her confidence, and related a long, harrowing tale of hard luck and ill-treatment, he was stirred to the very depths of his chivalrous nature. He determined to help her emerge from a desperate situation. All this he explained to his city editor, on returning to the Times-Democrat office. Under the circumstances, he added, he could not be expected to write the story. "She has told me all about herself," he said. "She just could not understand that I was there to get her story to publish to the curious and hostile world. I told her I would be her friend. She agreed not to do any more talking. I can't betray her confidence. That's all."

"Fine," replied the stony-hearted city editor. "Your sentiments do you credit. And you are fired."

Thereupon Sir Galahad went into the insurance business, and made much more money, though probably less fame, than if he had remained in the employ of the newspaper. But he never quite ceased to write for the press. When Joe Leveque started his ill-starred "World" (concerning which more anon), he contributed to its columns reams of excellent material—editorials, special articles, verses, literary criticism, and what-not—for which Leveque was never in a position to offer any compensation. Rightor followed Leveque to the "Harlequin," which was the latter's second and more viable journalistic offspring. For five or six years he was its editorial prop and mainstay. It was for the "Harlequin" that he wrote the epigrams subsequently embodied in "Harlequinade"—shrewd, sententious, often witty and sometimes melancholy comment on the human spectacle—probably the work in which the serious side of a many-faceted personality achieved its completest and sincerest expression.

As long as he figured in newspaper circles—and, indeed, for some years thereafter—Henry Rightor was a leading spirit in a small coterie of writers, musicians, artists, and beginning professional men. They constituted a real Bohemia, the last of its sort that New Orleans has known; although there exists nowadays a very pretty imitation thereof among "society" people and high-brows of one sort and another. In addition to Rightor, the group comprised H. R. R. Hertzberg, Scudday Richardson, Marye Trezevant, Frank Chalaron, Ben Forman, Jr., Joseph M. Leveque (mentioned above and to be mentioned again), and Walter Parker. Their headquarters, if they could be said to have had such, was

Parker's apartment in the French Quarter of the city. None of them had any income but what they collected for their newspaper labors; which wasn't much, newspaper work being notoriously ill-paid in those days; but such as they had, they shared with one another, down to the final penny. They were not quite sure where the next meal was coming from, but they had a sublime faith in its appearance, and while waiting for its arrival, were absurdly happy and gay with the irresponsible gaiety for which it was hard to find a parallel, even then, and which has probably vanished forever from the harried and bewildered civilization in which we live today.

Walter Parker, the historian of the group, describes its avocations, as follows:

They wrote plays, which sometimes were produced; several light operas; articles which occasionally sold for money; cooked their own dinners when they could not hire a cook; temporarily absorbed a business man into their ranks in order to have money to pay the rent when the landlord appeared; attended the opera and theaters on newspaper passes; fished when they were invited; did their travelling, when any was done, on railroad passes; sometimes used telegraph franks instead of buying postage stamps; and largely relied upon prowling after midnight through the by-ways and forgotten places in New Orleans for amusement. They knew all the theater folk from Madam Sarah Bernhardt down, and all the really efficient restaurant men and cooks on that side of Canal street. . . . They knew all the voodoo queens and outstanding fortune-tellers in New Orleans. They read Shakespeare, Cellini, Balzac as a regular diet. Dominick You, the pirate Lafitte's chief lieutenant, was the hero of many of their writings. The old bookstores on Royal street were their favorite haunts. The police courts, before which appeared many characters who could be found in no other city, gave them much material to work on. But there was no genius in their crowd to record this material in lasting form, with the exception of Henry Rightor, who preferred to write light operas, and such jingles as:

Adele, Adele, I wish you well.

Oh, may I kiss your toe?

No, no, Monsieur, my lips are here—

You need not stoop so low!*

Parker's long and useful life came to an end early in 1951. The rest of that remarkable little group preceded him to the grave.

*"The Hoo Doo Candle, and Other Stories." By Walter Parker. New Orleans, 8 vo., paper. Privately Printed 1939.

Hertzberg, he of the booming voice and bristling whiskers, died about twenty years ago in Chicago. At one time his department, "Silhouettes," was a daily feature of the editorial page of the Times-Democrat. I believe that in the preparation of this column "Hertzy" spent the happiest hours of his career. He had a really beautiful literary talent. His long residence in New Orleans was filled with devoted friendships and fierce enmities. He missed genius by the narrowest of margins. Scholar, poet, linguist, philosopher, he possessed all the qualities necessary for fame, save one—the spirit of concession. It was not in his nature to concede anything to anybody. That characteristic led eventually to his retirement from the Times-Democrat. Hertzberg went to New York, and met with a terrible accident there, which left him badly crippled. He came back to New Orleans, and it was then that "Hertzberg's Weekly" made its tragically brief appearance. Its demise sent its editor to Chicago, where for a decade he contributed to the leading journals, and there his tempestuous history came to a close.

Scuddy Richardson knew the Song of Solomon by heart and never missed an occasion to recite as much of it as his audience would tolerate. Money had no meaning for him. He could have been a good reporter, but he was a poet first and last, and could not resist the call of the Muses, even though it cost him a job. He was dismissed from the Times-Democrat when he forgot to cover a story to which he had been assigned, went to New York, and found employment on one of the leading papers there. His first mission was to report a fire. It was a stormy winter night. Heavy snow was falling. Scuddy returned to the office, to write some verses about the beauty of the flames seen through the snow storm. But he didn't know what was burned, or where the fire was. An indignant city editor gave him his walking papers. He drifted to Houston, Tex., and there, despondent, out of work, and penniless, he took his own life.

Trezevant, young, ambitious, and with a talent for cartooning, came to New Orleans from Memphis. He arrived with seven dollars in his pocket, a guitar, three shirts, an extra suit of clothes, and a burning desire to make a reputation. He was hired by the Daily Telegram for \$5 a week—which was sometimes paid, and sometimes not; the paper being on its last financial legs. Trezevant found himself acting as reporter, city editor, chief—and only—

editorial writer. He wrote every day a jibe or two at old Major Burbank, of the *Picayune*, whose "Picayunes" were a long-time feature of the editorial page of that staid, grandfatherly periodical. Trezevant was particularly intrigued by one of the Major's oyster-and-September jokes. In New Orleans it has long been an article of faith that the succulent bivalve may be eaten with impunity only in months that have the letter "r" in their names. So, when the first day of September was at hand, Major Burbank led off his column with this: "R. there, my oyster!" Trezevant clipped and quoted this and other none-too-merry apothegms from the *Picayune*, adding his own caustic comment to each. In this way he amused and offended his readers in about equal proportions. But he made himself known as a bright young fellow, and before many moons had waxed and waned, the States gave him a job at \$15 per week. He seemed destined to a brilliant career when he fell ill, and after two years of suffering, passed away in a private hospital at Pass Christian, Miss.

Frank Chalaron was a graduate physician when he gravitated into the little Bohemia of which I am writing. Patients were few, and he had much time to exercise his remarkable gift as an amateur cook. Many a palatable meal was evolved by his skilled hands out of the most unpromising materials. Then came the Spanish-American War. Frank was commissioned a major and put at the head of the medical staff of the Second Louisiana Regiment. When the not-so-cruel war was over he resumed his practice in New Orleans, and soon had no time for Bohemia and the culinary art. He died in New Orleans about 1940.

Ben Forman died suddenly in Illinois a good many years ago, leaving unfulfilled the promise of his early manhood.

Joseph Mark Leveque—such was his full name—was born in the western part of the state of Louisiana, but began his journalistic career in Texas. At one time he was city editor of a daily paper published in Fort Worth. Then he had a short and not very satisfactory experience in New York. He was about twenty-two years old when he came to New Orleans and obtained a position on the reportorial staff of the *Picayune*. He remained here for five years. He left the *Picayune* under rather odd circumstances. Joe had a sister whom he adored. She was a talented actress, known in the theater as Rhoda Cameron. She was attacked by a hip disease and compelled to abandon a promising

career when it had scarcely more than begun. Joe took this very much to heart. One day, in the "Green Room Gossip," a department of the Sunday Picayune devoted to theatrical news, Miss Cameron was mentioned with what, to Joe, seemed a reprehensible lack of enthusiasm. I am sure that no offense was intended, for Miss Cameron was really a very good actress, and the Picayune's dramatic editor thought so. But Joe voiced his indignation quite violently, and when the apologies which he demanded were not forthcoming, resigned his connection with the Picayune, and transferred his activities to the Times-Democrat.

Two years later he started the World. This was a morning daily, designed to compete on even terms with the Picayune and the Times-Democrat. Somehow, Joe had convinced a group of local capitalists that these two newspapers were veritable gold mines (which they were not), and that another comparable paper would yield a no less glittering harvest. But Joe's ideas about the business side of newspaper work were hazy in the extreme. He devoted himself to the editorial department, and let the administrative end of the ill-starred enterprise pretty much take care of itself. The one enduring contribution to New Orleans journalism that can be credited to the World came when its press was installed in a show-window looking into Camp street. The public approved the idea, which has since been adopted and elaborated by the other New Orleans newspapers and by many elsewhere. But few persons ever saw the World's big machine in operation. In those days the local papers published only one edition a day, the morning dailies about 4 a. m., and the afternoon dailies at 2 p. m. Not many people stayed up to the wee sma' hours to see the World's press grinding out its matutinal garner of news, editorial comment, and theatrical criticism.

The World ran its brief, unprofitable course and passed out of existence in the space of a few months. The promoters lost a good deal of money, but Joe acquired some valuable experience. This he applied to his next editorial venture, the afore-mentioned weekly, "Harlequin," which lasted much longer and was a good deal more entertaining than its ambitious predecessor. The "Harlequin" lived from 1899 to 1905—which is a long time for a New Orleans literary and critical periodical. When it folded up, Joe went to New York and was employed on a variety of newspapers there, one after the other; and then, one day, in 1911,

as he was hurrying down Forty-Second street to cover an assignment, he dropped dead of a heart-attack. He was not quite forty-four years old.

Leveque was a man of genuine talent, but seemed never to find the thing which he was best qualified to do. He was a good reporter, but not content to be no more than that. I suspect that literature was one of many activities in which, if he scored any success, he did so by main strength and obstinacy, rather than by innate capacity. He wrote a good deal of fiction for the Sunday Picayune—short stories, generally well-thought-out and neatly constructed, but uniformly slow-motion and tiresome. His editorial performances were dictated by knowledge and sincere civic feeling, but they, too, left the reader unmoved. Joe believed himself a humorist, but he lacked the lightness of touch, the nimbleness of idea, and the human sympathy necessary to success in that branch of literary endeavor.

Perhaps nothing so aptly illustrated Leveque's limitations as his two comic operas, "The Swimming Girl" and "King Capital." He wrote them to show his Bohemian cronies that he could rush in where Henry Rightor had not feared to tread. Wehrmann supplied the music for both little works. In "King Capital" the leading character was attired in black tights, on which was painted a skeleton, and had a hood in the form of a death-mask. In this gruesome guise he executed what was supposed to be a hilariously funny dance, at the same time cracking some of Joe's typically ponderous jokes. All this was in doubtful taste, and the audience did not appreciate the performance. Joe affected to despise death, found funerals amusing, and liked to parody the orations pronounced over the biers of individuals whom he had known in life to be unworthy of commendation. He did not see why the public declined to share his views on this lugubrious subject. He was never able to explain to himself the failure of "King Capital." And that, I think, shows what in his mentality was lacking which prevented him from achieving the solid and durable success to which his abilities, honesty, sincerity and unselfishness (for he had all these qualities) properly entitled him.

One of the innovations introduced by Henry Rightor during his connection with the Times-Picayune was a column on the editorial page to which he gave the title of "By-the-By." This

was the first example in my knowledge of a kind of quasi-editorial, quasi-reportorial feature that has, since Rightor's day, spread like a rash over journalism in this country. "By-the-By" avoided infringing upon the other departments of the newspaper; consequently, it contained nothing about politics, social life, or the events which made up the news of the moment. It specialized in matters that were not newsworthy, but lent themselves to a whimsical, meditative, more or less philosophical treatment, usually gay as most of Rightor's writing were gay, but always with a substratum of good, hard common-sense to give body and significance. Rightor conducted the column for several years with great success. When he left the Times-Democrat, there was no one immediately available to take over the task, and it looked for a time as though a very popular feature would have to be discontinued.

However, at that juncture a stranger drifted into the Times-Democrat office, and, being informed of the dilemma with which the management was confronted, asked leave to try his hand on the "By-the-By" column. Permission was somewhat grudgingly granted. The copy which he handed in was so charmingly written, so urbane and distinguished in point of view, so apt in the selection of material, that Rightor, not even in his most inspired moments, had ever acquitted himself more brilliantly. Page Baker, then the Times-Democrat's editor-in-chief, who loved literature and patronized talent wherever he encountered it, was delighted. He offered the newcomer a permanent place on the staff at a salary of \$40 per week—a handsome salary, as salaries went in those days. The offer was promptly accepted, and the "By-the-By" column, under new but highly competent control, was resumed with steadily increasing success.

Orth Stein—that, he explained, was his name—was a Philadelphia journalist in poor health, who had come to the Deep South hoping that a warm climate would benefit the disease of the lungs which, according to the doctors, must otherwise speedily put an end to his existence. A racking cough bore testimony to the gravity of his ailment. That did not interfere with the strict performance of his duties, or detract from a genial and understanding manner which greatly endeared him to his associates. For a year or two. Then he died. And with his death his true story came out.

He wasn't a newspaperman at all. He had been for years head of a gang of desperadoes who had terrified a large section of Pennsylvania. They had looted banks, robbed on the highways, committed murders. Stein himself had been convicted of a particularly brutal and cowardly assassination. Sent to the penitentiary, he had somehow managed to wangle a fairly short term of imprisonment, and then, debilitated by tuberculosis, and no longer physically able to carry on his nefarious occupations, he had come to New Orleans, partly, as he said, in search of a propitious climate, but chiefly because his sulphurous reputation had not penetrated as far as the Deep South, then more than now remote from the scene of his sensational exploits.

It is said that Stein confessed all this to Baker when he joined the staff of the Times-Democrat. But that is improbable. In announcing Stein's death the paper printed an editorial eulogizing him as a writer and as a man in terms which Baker could hardly have permitted himself, had he been aware of the real character of the individual whom he was praising so highly. It is a remarkable fact that so notorious a criminal could have escaped exposure for the considerable period that Stein spent in New Orleans. The local police knew, it is true, and required him to report every week at the Central Station. But they kept his secret. They did warn him, however, that if anything happened in his vicinity to require their attention, he would be instantly put under arrest. Perhaps that kept Stein from doing in the city anything of a censurable nature; perhaps his disease worked a change in his character in proportion as it sapped his strength and stripped him of the incentives that had previously led him into crime. Who knows? At any rate, after his death, the Philadelphia papers spread his disastrous story over pages and pages of small type, and they were eagerly read in newspaper circles when they arrived in New Orleans, but they never reached the public at large, and nothing was ever said in the local press to spoil the reputation that Stein had built up for himself in his adopted home, as an able journalist, a courteous, considerate gentleman, and a gifted scholar.

Towards the end of his life, Stein, finding his strength not always adequate to the execution of the plans which he had formulated for the "By-the-By" column, wrote to Mr. Baker, instancing the fact and asking that his salary be proportionately

reduced. This, I believe, is the only case in newspaper history where a man has voluntarily proposed anything of the kind. Baker, of course, declined to accede to this unprecedented request, but he had Stein's letter framed, and for years it hung on the wall of his private office, beside the famous letter written by Lafcadio Hearn from Grand Isle, which was one of Baker's other treasured keepsakes. Baker sent Hearn to Grand Isle to write a series of articles for the Sunday Times-Democrat; which Hearn neglected to do, but sent instead a letter explaining and justifying his failure, which was a characteristically beautiful piece of literature. Baker felt that Stein's epistle had a place beside Hearn's, though for a quite different reason. After Baker's death both letters disappeared from his office wall. One would like to know what became of them.

In those good old days the editorial page was one of the most important features of any newspaper which aspired to be regarded as a factor in molding public opinion; as what newspaper did not so aspire? The editorial page of the Times-Democrat was, on the whole, the ablest and most influential in the South. Baker wrote frequently for it, and being a man of considerable literary ability, his contributions helped materially to lend distinction to its columns. Norman Walker, about whom I have had something to say elsewhere, furnished a daily stint of editorial matter, often of great importance. But the ordinary, every-day routine work was performed by "Major" Grant and "Captain" Pool.

Where "Major" Grant acquired his military title I do not know, it was probably honorary, conceded by fellow-professionals in tribute to his abilities and to his position on the paper. Grant was a Britisher by birth, and a bachelor by preference. He had received a fine education in the efficient schools of his native island. One of his peculiarities was a dislike for American street cars. Rather than make use of them, he walked long distances every day to and from the office, alone except for the ponderous British walking stick, his inevitable accompaniment, with which he trumped the sidewalks vigorously as he strode along. Grant's editorials were always well-written, solid, informative, but, more often than not, went over the head of the less erudite reader.

Carleton Pool was a brother of Stephen Pool, who died about 1891, while serving as city editor of the Times-Democrat. Carleton succeeded to the job, but he was temperamentally unsuited to it,

as well as to the post of night editor, to which he was promoted after not too long an interval. It was only as an editorial writer that he found himself. He was a genuine humorist. Some of his editorials, written in a mock-serious vein, were laughed over, reprinted and imitated all over the country. One of his most amusing series dealt with the subject of pie, "cross-bar," "open face" and "kivered," as Pool differentiated the possible varieties of that typical American delicacy. He got involved in a spirited controversy with other newspapers which took up the subject, arguing the superiority of one or another of these various kinds of pie, but I do not recall that they ever reached a definite conclusion upon this engrossing matter.

Pool got his captaincy by service in the army during the Spanish-American War. He organized the "T-D Rifles" from among the members of the local and composing rooms of the paper, thereby seriously depleting those two important departments. The "T-D Rifles" never got to Cuba, and were mustered out of the service after six or eight months of rather inglorious service. Pool resumed his editorial post in the Times-Democrat organization, but a few years later, overtaken by age and infirmities, he was obliged to retire, went to live in one of the summer-resort towns on the Gulf coast, and, if memory serves me right, died there just after the First World War.

The financial and commercial editorials in the Times-Democrat were usually indited by Ashton Phelps, who also contributed a daily news article about the cotton market. He was the sempiternal president of the Times-Democrat publishing company, and took an active part in its management. He was in fact, if not in name, the business manager of the paper, Albert Winterhalder, who had the title, being actually little more than a clerk.

Phelps got into journalism in New Orleans in 1879, when he was twenty-six years of age. Then, for forty years, he was a busy and important figure in the profession. He died in New Orleans in his sixty-sixth year. Nowadays Phelps is remembered less for the merits of his daily cotton article, which were no doubt considerable, than for his habit of prefixing to each of them a quotation from Shakespeare, often applied very wittily to the prevalent conditions in the cotton market. There were people—I, for one!—who regularly consulted Phelps' screed, not because they were interested in the cotton business, but because they

enjoyed the three or four lines culled that day from the magic pages of the Bard.

When declining health obliged Phelps to discontinue his cotton articles, he selected Walter Parker as his successor. Parker, who had been exchange editor at the Time-Democrat, at a salary of \$25 per week, resigned, and was leaving the Times-Democrat office when, at the bottom of the stairs, he met Phelps coming up. Phelps, who happened at that moment to be turning over in his mind the question of a successor, suddenly decided that he had the right man before him, and offered Parker \$50 a week to do the work. Needless to say, Parker accepted. The cotton article necessitated only a few hours' labor per day, and he was able also to take on the editorship of the Insurance Vindicator, at an equally munificent salary. Camp street never forgave Parker for becoming so suddenly and inconsistently prosperous.

The literary features of the Times-Democrat were handled by Page Baker's brother, Marion. Marion Baker was a reserved, self-effacing individual, known intimately to few, even on the staff of the paper that he served so long and so well. Although not without literary talent, he wrote little and published less. But under his direction the Sunday supplement of the Times-Democrat took on and long maintained a high degree of literary excellence. Perhaps it was a bit solid and old-fashioned, but it contained a great deal of reading matter to which one can turn even now with pleasure and profit.

Every Sunday Marion Baker featured a poem conspicuously at the top of an inside page of his supplement. It was surrounded by ample white margins, and embellished with head- and tail-pieces appropriately designed. He paid five dollars for the verses. As this was as much as was offered for similar work by the leading American magazines, such as the Century and Harper's Monthly, Baker commanded the poems of the best Southern writers of that day. More than one subsequently famous name first appeared in type in this way, and more than one poem found its way into print in the Sunday Times-Democrat which has since been recognized as a genuine contribution to the permanent poetic literature of this country.

In all these activities Baker was assisted by his wife, who, before her marriage in 1888, was known as Julia K. Wetherill, a

novelist of some distinction. Mrs. Baker not only helped with the routine editorial chores, but contributed regularly to the paper, writing sometimes over her initials, "J. K. W.," but most often anonymously. When Lafcadio Hearn left the Times-Democrat, Mrs. Baker continued the literary editorial which for several years had been a feature of the Sunday editorial page, and it must be said, her work was distinguished by the same fine quality of style and content that had graced the work of her predecessor. She also furnished every week a survey of contemporary magazine literature, entitled "Literary By-Ways." After her husband's death in 1908, Mrs. Baker withdrew from active participation in newspaper work. She died some ten or twelve years later.

Marion Baker's successor as editor of the Times-Democrat's literary department was Robert Mayfield, an artist who originally came to the paper to draw news illustrations and engrave them on the chalk plates which were then the only medium whereby such work could be transmitted to the public. Mayfield's usefulness was curtailed when the photo-engraving processes were introduced in New Orleans about 1892, and he branched out as a music critic. In spite of a somewhat limited technical equipment and no great experience as a writer, he acquitted himself in that difficult field about as well as his rivals on the other New Orleans newspapers. He also made himself useful as assistant to Baker, reading proof and doing the other editorial chores which that gentleman was beginning to find, by reason of advancing years, troublesome to perform. That was what he was doing when Baker's death placed him in the editorial chair.

Mayfield's talent for painting was much greater than his talent for journalism. In his student years he had studied the art in Paris under capable masters. He busied himself at his easel in the leisure remaining from his work at the newspaper, and turned out two or three excellent pictures, at least one of which may be seen today in the Delgado Museum. He made some etchings of New Orleans scenes, which, while probably not as meritorious as his work in oils, have value as records of the changing aspect of the city in his time.

One of the most curious characters among the editorial writers at the Times-Democrat in those old days was James Edmonds, who professed to be a Mohammedan, wore a long beard and a wide-brimmed, steeple-crowned felt hat, and in the street

was always enveloped in an overcoat, regardless of the weather. He came to Newspaper Row in the '80s, and was employed for a time on the Picayune, but soon transferred his allegiance to the Times-Democrat, where he spent the rest of his life. Edmonds was a profound scholar, and his editorial writing was of very high order, though perhaps the average New Orleans reader was unable sometimes to follow it through. He claimed to be the first man ever to use a typewriter in newspaper work, and cherished an ancient rattletrap machine about twice the size of the typewriters of the present day, which made an appalling racket when in use.

Edmonds left the Picayune when one of his editorials was, as he thought, mishandled by his superior. The editorial was entitled "The Proletarian and the Assintote," a title which the chief editorial writer, coming in at midnight somewhat the worse for a visit to a neighboring barroom, looked at with much misgivings. He finally cut off the first and last paragraphs, pasted them together, and sent them up to the composing room. When this emasculated masterpiece appeared the next morning, Edmonds indignantly tendered his resignation, which was accepted.

Edmonds' end was sad. He lost his mind, wandered out to the banks of the Mississippi below the city, in St. Bernard Parish, fell into a quicksand, and disappeared. It was after his death that Mayfield was asked to contribute to the editorial page, which he did with such satisfaction to the editor-in-chief that he was promoted to be chief editorial writer. That post he retained till, some ten or fifteen years later, he, too, was called to his reward.

Page Baker's instructions to the men on his newsgathering staff were to get the news, but never to forget that they were, first and foremost, gentlemen. On the whole, the reporters kept reasonably close to Baker's requirement. The Times-Democrat's local room, with a few regrettable exceptions, was populated by gentlemen. Also, except for a few regrettable exceptions, they got the news. Certainly no one could question the behavior or the ability of such men as John Coleman, Henry M. Mayo, or "Captain" W. H. Williams, to instance a few quite at random. Coleman was a small, wiry, bald-headed man with a nervous manner and a remarkable facility in collecting the news without ever appearing to make any serious effort in that direction. He

reported the City Hall for the better part of a generation. He came to be regarded as virtually a part of the city government. Administrations came and went, but Coleman remained, respected, beloved and trusted by every one with whom he came in contact in the performance of his duties. Finally, Mayor Behrman appointed him his secretary, a choice generally applauded as a tribute to Coleman's talents, industry, integrity and pleasing personality.

Mayo was for some years the Times-Democrat's "star" general reporter, but left the paper when offered the post of secretary of the Progressive Union. Then, fearing that the Union might go broke (as it did), he entered the employ of the Southern Pacific Railroad, and served it loyally and successfully until his retirement, some years ago. He, and Walter Parker, were, I believe, the last members of the Times-Democrat's reportorial organization to survive from the old days of which I am writing. Mayo made his home in Houston, Tex., where he died.

"Captain" Williams was a "glass of fashion" from his carefully tended auburn whiskers to his white spats and patent-leather shoes. He was a Canadian, and did a notable piece of work for the Canadian newspapers in reporting the Riel Rebellion in 1885. He then came to New Orleans, and was as much of a dramatic and sports editor as the Times-Democrat permitted itself. Williams prided himself—and with justice—upon his elegant and scholarly English style, and was constantly being assigned to write those flowery introductory paragraphs without which no important news story was then allowed to appear in a New Orleans newspaper. His son, Harry, was also a member of the Times-Democrat reportorial staff. Father and son eventually migrated to New York, where they were connected with the Morning Telegraph and other metropolitan journals, writing sporting news, chiefly.

In this connection mention should also be made of Jack Meehan, a likable, devil-may-care sort of chap, at one time connected with the Associated Press, whose wife, Sake Meehan, was once prominent in the woman's club movement; Jerry Horn, another who affected the old-time professional costume of silk hat, Prince Albert coat and striped trousers, and was—also in the old tradition—always ready to borrow a half-dollar; Ed Olivieri, Rixford Lincoln, William E. Arms, Dudley Watson,

O'Neill Sevier—alas, memory does not retain the names of the other capable men who lent their efforts to make of the Times-Democrat the admirable news medium which it was in those days.

Olivieri was a "star" reporter in the late '80s and early '90s, and did notable work during the exciting anti-lottery campaign of 1890, 1891 and 1892. He finished his career as a stenographer in one of the local courts. Lincoln was at one period assistant commercial editor at a salary of \$15 per week, but he preferred to write verses to compiling statistics, and Page Baker had to ask for his resignation. Lincoln wrote his employer a farewell letter, in which he said he did not tremble at leaving the paper, seeing that "the Lord would provide," which He did in due course. Thereafter few events transpired in New Orleans that were not celebrated by Lincoln's diligent pen. Most of these verses found their way into the Picayune, where, I fear, a somewhat more lax standard of poetic excellence prevailed than on the Times-Democrat.

Arms began his newspaper career as a reporter on the Item in the early '90s, then went to the States, and later to the Times-Democrat. He was a large, slow-moving man, and his literary style partook of these physical characteristics. When Pool went away to the wars, in 1898, Arms replaced him as night editor, and I believe functioned in that capacity till his death, a few years later.

Dudley Watson came to New Orleans from Memphis with a very good opinion of himself, which experience soon reduced to dimensions more nearly approximating the reality. Nevertheless, Watson was a man of real ability, and but for a chronic distaste for what was known as "leg work," would have distinguished himself as a newsgatherer. Watson married a socially prominent young lady, at a ceremony at which the Archbishop of New Orleans officiated. His death a few years later was deplored by his newspaper associates, with whom he was very popular. Another likable fellow was O'Neill Sevier. He was a descendant of one of the early governors of Tennessee, a fact of which he was inordinately proud. Sevier always spent his salary before he got it, and boasted of having creditors in every street leading to the Times-Democrat office, so that he had to exercise the utmost ingenuity in reaching that destination without being

intercepted by persons demanding the cash that he owed and could not pay.

One of the most beloved members of the Times-Democrat staff was Bertie Sneed, whose death in the Spanish-American War in 1898 was the occasion of a civic funeral, the like of which New Orleans has probably never seen. Sneed was a product of Mississippi, and had acquired some professional training on a weekly publication in Kosciusko. He was at first employed on the Picayune, but the offer of a larger stipend lured him away from it, and when the war broke out, he was a "star" reporter on the Times-Democrat.

Sneed was one of Pool's most enthusiastic aids in recruiting the "T-D Rifles," and became its first lieutenant. Never was there less of a martinet. Sneed had small conception of military rank, and none of discipline. He played baseball with his men, granted them leave-of-absence with indiscriminate generosity, greeted everybody by his first name, and did not understand why anybody should obey his orders. The result was that every man in the ranks laughed at him, loved him, and would cheerfully have sacrificed limb or life in his defense. When he succumbed to typhoid fever in the pest-ridden camp at Miami, Fla., they mourned for him with sincere and lasting sorrow.

Sneed's body was sent home, and all New Orleans turned out to honor his memory. The coffin lay in state in the City Hall. It was followed to the grave by practically every person of consequence in the city. This was a tribute largely due to Sneed's own winning personality, but it was also provoked by a series of articles describing the appalling health conditions at Miami, sent in by the correspondents of the New Orleans newspapers on duty with the troops. "Billy" Leppert, who was serving in the "T-D Rifles" as a private, was particularly vitriolic in his articles in the Times-Democrat. In those days the army tolerated the presence in the ranks of men who were newspaper correspondents as well as soldiers, and Leppert was permitted to write and publish comment on his superior officers and their management of the camp which would have got him into serious trouble nowadays. His articles aroused intense indignation in New Orleans, and the outpouring of the citizenry at Sneed's funeral was in large part an expression of the public resentment at what was undeniably a shameful state of affairs, not only at Miami, but

at a good many of the other camps where our volunteer troops were held pending the development of the campaign in Cuba.

Those were the days when American journalism was obsessed with the notion of the "scoop." A "scoop" was a bit of news published by one newspaper in advance of its contemporaries. It did not much matter that the item was unimportant; the essential thing was its early and exclusive publication. The newspaper which accomplished this feat plumed itself accordingly, and the public, which probably did not fully understand the implications of such editorial boasting, applauded appropriately and sometimes vociferously. New Orleans was not exempt from this species of journalistic foolishness.

The rivalry between the Picayune and the Times-Democrat in this direction led to some amusing incidents. On one occasion the Times-Democrat had an exclusive story about a big local fire which it was in a great hurry to get into print. Large-type headlines were rushed into the front-page make-up, but in the haste and confusion that always attended the final moments of work in the composing room, the story itself was mislaid and never did get into the paper. The headlines were there, big and black, but there was no text below them. "Well," explained one of the Times-Democrat's editors, "at least we let the world know that we had the news, even if we didn't care to print it!"

The Times-Democrat escaped only by the proverbial hair's breadth from being "scooped" on what was probably the most important item that has ever developed in journalistic history in New Orleans. This was the death of Jefferson Davis, ex-president of the Confederacy. As is well known, Davis died in New Orleans at the home of his friend, J. U. Payne, in December, 1889, very late in the night, after a protracted illness. The death had been expected for several days, and elaborate preparations had been made at each newspaper office to chronicle the event with all due literary pomp. Reporters tried to keep in touch with the Payne household, which was not easy then, when telephones were rare, and the use of them in collecting news was frowned upon by the public.

One of the Picayune's reporters, Guy Armstrong, scraped acquaintance with one of the maids at the Payne residence, and late every night, on his way home, stopped at the service gateway to obtain from the girl the latest bulletin regarding the distin-

guished invalid. On the fateful night Armstrong arrived on his round just a few minutes after Davis breathed his last. He was promptly furnished with a circumstantial account of the event. He lost no time in getting to the Picayune office, where he wrote his story in hot haste. It was spread over the front page, along with an eight or ten column biography already in type. It looked as though the Picayune was assured of a "scoop" that would make history.

But it was not to be. Alas, the Picayune's financial policies were on the cheese-paring side. Salaries were so low that the staff had to resort to every possible means to augment their microscopic stipends. A favorite device was to act as "correspondent" for some "foreign" newspaper. Even Major Robinson, the genial and gifted city editor, had a "string" of newspapers scattered over the Union which he served to their great satisfaction and his own profit. Davis' death was an item which would be eagerly accepted and richly compensated by any and every journal in the country. The Major circularized his customers by telegraph, and orders for the story came pouring in.

The news leaked out in New York. One of the papers not favored with an offer from Robinson telegraphed the Associated Press office in New Orleans, indignantly demanding to know why that organization did not have the full facts. As a matter of fact, it hadn't. Major Robinson had seen to that. He did not propose that the news should leave the Picayune office until it had paid toll. This was a mistake. He should have confided the situation to his visitor, and obtained his co-operation in protecting the unparalleled "scoop" that luck had placed in his hands. As it was, the Associated Press man, supposing that if the Picayune had the news, the Times-Democrat had it also, and that if one paper refused to furnish the details, they might be secured from the other, went immediately to the latter office and presented his request.

That, of course, was a veritable bomb shell, insofar as the Times-Democrat was concerned. Its explosion rocked the establishment from the composing-room down to the basement where the pressmen were getting ready to run off the morning edition. There was just time to insert a line or two into the front-page. The details of Davis' death might come later, but at least the essential feature of the story was there. The Associated Press

got its information in due course, but not until both the papers, Times-Democrat and Picayune, were on the streets and in the mails. Robinson was, naturally, chagrined to find that the greatest "scoop" of the century had missed fire. But it was too late to do anything about it. Besides, he had reaped a sizable financial harvest, and that, no doubt, was very consoling.

Well, all that was long ago. Today newspapers are conducted in so ordered and business-like a fashion that the exclusive publication of news, when it happens, adds little to profit and less to prestige. Edition succeeds edition so rapidly nowadays that such publications can remain exclusive only for a few minutes, and the public has little opportunity to ascertain to which journal the priority should be assigned. No doubt the change works to the advantage of the newspaper publisher, and of the newspaper reader no less. But it has stripped the reporter of much of the incentive which formerly spurred him on to noteworthy exhibitions of individual enterprise, and perhaps it has taken from him most of the loyalty, idealism, and self-sacrifice which once lent glamor to an exacting and not-very-remunerative vocation.

In fact, newspaper work is different nowadays in almost all its aspects from what it was in the Eighteen-nineties. The journalist is no longer a "journalist;" he works at a business, forty hours a week, with an eye perpetually fixed upon the clock. The duties are chiefly mechanical; one does his job as well as he can, but has no longer any pride in it. The old spirit is not there any more. Nowadays the New Orleans morning newspapers print their first editions at midnight, and thereafter, throughout the day, hardly an hour passes that does not see another edition put to press. The city editor has a corps of assistants. There are half-a-dozen men on the copy desk, "shooting up" copy to the printers all day long. When about 4 p. m. the last edition for the day is cried along the thoroughfares by the newsboys, the men responsible for it go home, and leave the office to another force which will see to the preparation of the early morning edition. It is all very systematic, but as unromantic as a factory or a countingroom. I wonder whether, fifty years from now, it will seem worth while to list the names, chronicle the exploits, or describe the personalities of the men who fabricate the huge, unwieldy, unpicturesque, efficient but uninspiring periodicals of the present bewildered epoch.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED
BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS
OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233)
of The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, published quarterly at New Orleans, La. for
October 1, 1950.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, The Louisiana Historical Society, 521 Carondelet Bldg., New Orleans, La.:
Editor, Charles J. Macmurdo, Chairman, Dr. Lionel C. Durel, Judge Walter B. Hamlin:
Committee on Publications.

2. The owner is the The Louisiana Historical Society, an educational institution, New Orleans, La.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner. None.

(Signed) CHARLES J. MACMURDO, Chairman,
Committee on Publications.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of September, 1950.

E. A. PARSONS, Notary Public.

(SEAL)

(My commission is for life.)



